

How to Identify and Control Rats & Mice

RATS and MICE:

Rats and mice are rodents that are commonly found living near people. They can be very destructive to homes and can carry germs that make people sick. They often make their nests in and around people's homes and office buildings.

The most common rodents encountered by residents in Fairfax County are the Norway rat and the house mouse. Both of these rodents are very good at jumping, climbing, swimming, gnawing and squeezing through very small spaces.

Common (Norway) RAT

The Norway rat digs and travels through burrows, and will nest up to 150 feet from its food supply. It can make a nest in your home by gnawing holes in sheds, walls, etc., or by squeezing through cracks and crevices in foundations, vents, etc.



FACT: Rats can squeeze through spaces as small as a quarter!

House MOUSE

The house mouse usually makes a nest in stored materials indoors, but can also live outside, burrowing in areas around fields and lawns. Mice often become a problem in the fall when they enter homes to seek warmth. Mice tend to nest only 10 to 30 feet from their food supply.



FACT: Mice can squeeze through spaces as small as a nickel!

Is Your Home Open to RATS and MICE?

Rats and mice often make their nests in and around people's homes and office buildings. Rodents can be found anywhere in Fairfax County. If your home or building can provide shelter and a food source, you are inviting rats and mice to move in!

How Do Rodents Get In?

Rats and mice can crawl through very small spaces (under doors, into crevices, etc.) and when they can't fit, then they simply gnaw and chew their way through.

Common Entry-Ways for Rodents:

- Gaps under doors
- Pipe and wire chases
- Cracks in foundations
- Crawl space doors and vents
- Vents or other holes without screens
- Holes that have been chewed in plastic, wood, drywall
- Holes that have been dug in the dirt or grass

Signs You Have RATS and MICE

The most common signs of rats and mice are the evidence they leave behind, such as burrows, fecal droppings, tracks, chewed-out holes in walls, chewed wires, urine stains and nesting materials. You are more likely to see or hear rodents shortly after dark and in the early morning.



Rodent Burrows

Rodents use burrows to move from place to place. Burrows are typically found around concrete slabs and building foundations, under materials stored outdoors and along fence rows.

An active burrow entrance is usually a hole in the ground, clear of leaves and debris. To find out if the burrow is active, loosely fill the opening of the hole with dirt. If a rodent is using that burrow, the hole will reappear. You cannot eliminate rodents by blocking their burrows. They can simply dig another burrow.

Active burrow "runways" are usually paths of smooth dirt—clear of grass and debris—that often follow along a wall or fence.

What Rodents Eat

- trash and garbage in plastic bags
- spilled or discarded food
- bird seed spilled on the ground
- food from low-hanging feeder
- kitchen scraps
- pet food
- pet feces
- flower bulbs and seeds



How to CONTROL RATS and MICE

To control rodents, you **MUST** remove their food, shelter and entry points to your home or other buildings. **Follow these three steps to control rodents: (1) seal up; (2) trap; and (3) clean up.**

Look for holes inside and outside your home, such as behind refrigerators and stoves; inside the attic; around windows, doors and your home's foundation; and around pipes.

How to Rodent Proof Your Home and Buildings

- Seal holes larger than a dime and cracks larger than the diameter of a pencil to prevent rodents from entering your home.
- Seal gaps around pipe and wire chases.
- Make sure all doors, including the garage door, have weather stripping.
- Make sure crawl space doors and vent covers are in good repair.
- Check around your home and other buildings often to correct problem areas.

SEAL UP holes or gaps in your home to prevent rodents from returning.

Use sealants that are strong and durable such as:

- steel wool
- expandable foam
- putty or caulk
- cement
- copper stuffing

Trapping is the recommended method for indoor rodent control.

Many varieties of traps are available:

- Snap traps and glue boards are best used when just a few rodents are present.
- Catch traps are best for a larger numbers of rodents.
- All traps are more effective when peanut butter or bacon is used to lure the rodent to the trap. Keep the trap in one place to give rodents a chance to get used to it being there.
- Always follow manufacturer instructions.

Baiting with Pesticide

There are many types of baits, which control rodents using a food source mixed with poison. Some baits require repeated doses over several days before the rodent dies. Other baits kill the rodent after a single dose.

- Baits must be contained in tamper-proof containers to help protect children, pets and unintended wildlife.
- Place baits in areas where rodents are already feeding. Rats avoid new objects and foods. Mice are not suspicious of new objects, but tend to nibble and may not eat enough to get a lethal dose.
- Check the bait daily and replace it as needed.
- Always follow manufacturer instructions when using toxic baits or any pesticide.

TRAP rodents in and around your home using an appropriate snap trap.

Hire a Professional

You may choose to hire a licensed pest management professional who can provide expertise in effectively and safely placing pesticides. This is recommended for eliminating large numbers of rodents (infestations).

How to Rodent Proof Your Yard

- Remove all rodent food.
- Keep trash and garbage in a rodent-proof container, such as a trash can with a tight-locking lid.
- Clean trash cans and dumpsters regularly and make sure their doors and/or lids close tightly.
- Prevent bird seed from falling to the ground.
- Remove piles of wood, furniture and other yard debris.
- Cut grass low to the ground and trim plants, bushes and branches away from the home or building.
- Pick up pet waste regularly and place it into a receptacle, such as a trash can with a tight fitting lid.

CLEAN UP any sources of food or water, and items that might provide shelter for rodents.

Wet Cleaning

When you begin cleaning areas where there was rodent activity, it is important that you do not stir up dust by sweeping or vacuuming up droppings, urine, or nesting materials. Instead, wet cleaning is recommended for droppings, urine, and nesting materials.

- Use personal protective equipment during cleaning, such as gloves and a mask.
- Spray or soak droppings, urine and nesting materials with a disinfecting agent following label instructions.
- Use paper towels to wipe up droppings, urine and nesting materials and place the waste into in plastic bag. Seal the bag and then place it inside another plastic bag. Discard bags with normal trash.

HEALTH HAZARDS from Rodents

- ✓ Rodents contaminate food and can make people sick.
- ✓ Rodents leave urine and fecal droppings wherever they travel, feed or nest.
- ✓ More than 200 germs can be transmitted by rodents in their saliva, fecal droppings or urine.
- ✓ A protein in rodent urine can cause allergic reactions in some people.
- ✓ Rodents can cause house fires by gnawing on wires.
- ✓ Baby rodents mature in 2-5 months and can produce up to six litters a year. A pair of rats and their offspring could multiply to 278 rats in one year!