

PestInfo



INTEGRATED PEST MANAGEMENT FOR CHILD CARE CENTERS

STOP MICE AND RATS FROM INVADING YOUR CHILD CARE CENTER

Mice and rats chew on anything that looks like food or nesting material. This can include cardboard boxes, books, art projects, electrical wires, and plastic bags. Mice and rats also make a mess by leaving smelly trails of urine and droppings wherever they feed. They can spread disease, make allergies worse, and leave behind parasites, like fleas.



Roof Rat

BIOLOGY AND BEHAVIOR

A mischief of mice

The **house mouse** lives throughout the United States in open fields as well as buildings. Indoors, mice live inside walls, above suspended ceilings, and in drawers and cupboards. They can also make their homes on high shelves and in clutter. They prefer to eat grains but will nibble on anything. They can fit through spaces as small as a quarter inch – that is, under most doors.

A pack of rats

The **Norway rat**, also known as the sewer rat, lives throughout California. Its burrows are found along building foundations, beneath trash piles, and around gardens, and in unused sewers and storm drains. Indoors, Norway rats prefer living close to the ground floor in basements and wall voids. The **roof rat** lives in the Western half of California in trees, woodpiles, and debris. Roof rats are good climbers. Indoors, they like to live in attics and ceiling voids. Both types of rat will eat almost anything.

CHECKLIST FOR GETTING RID OF MICE AND RATS

MECHANICAL CONTROL

RATS

- ✓ **When setting traps**, be aware that rats are cautious. Put bait into snap traps without setting them. This will get the rats used to feeding from the traps. Once the rats are eating the bait, set the traps. Keep traps away from children. Sticky traps don't work as well as snap traps. Rats will usually feel them and then avoid them.

MICE

- ✓ **Place snap traps** in corners with the trigger out. These can be also placed along walls with the trigger end toward the wall. Glue traps can be a problem. It is not pleasant for children and staff to discover a live rodent stuck in glue dying a slow death. Snap traps provide a quick death.
- ✓ **Ultrasonic devices** – Don't waste your money. Despite the ads you may read, studies have shown that these devices don't really work.

CHEMICAL OPTIONS

- ✓ **Your first step** should be stopping rats and mice from coming into buildings. If that doesn't work and you need chemical control, put the poisoned bait in a tamper-resistant bait station. See UC IPM's Pest Notes #7483 (house mice) and #74106 (rats) for guidance (www.ucipm.ucdavis.edu).
- ✓ **If mice suddenly invade** an out-of-the-way place like a ceiling void, don't scatter pellet bait. Mice sometimes move the bait from well hidden to public places, where children can pick it up.

WHAT CAN YOU DO TO HELP PREVENT RODENTS FROM BECOMING A PROBLEM?

IN THE ACTIVITY ROOM

- Keep activity rooms clean by allowing food and beverages only in designated areas.
- Take food out of cubbies and desks every day.
- Keep down clutter in activity rooms. Mice love to nest in fabric, stacks of construction paper, and other art supplies. Store these in plastic boxes with tightly fitting lids.
- Store food in tightly sealed containers, including food for children, pets, and your own food. Take down art projects made with pasta or candy from walls.
- Talk to cleaning staff about keeping an eye out for gnaw marks, destroyed material, droppings and other signs rodents are present.
- Vacuum carpets daily in areas where food is served.

IN THE KITCHEN

- Clean floors, counters, cabinets, and tables. Sweep and mop floors every day.
- Take garbage out at the end of each day.
- Store and seal food waste in plastic bags before removal.
- Clean dirty dishes, utensils, appliances, cabinets, shelving, and surfaces by the end of each day.
- Check all received goods. You should refuse anything that's infested, leaking, or contaminated.
- Store non-perishable food in pest-proof containers, not in cardboard boxes.
- Put received goods on clean shelves or mobile storage carts.

STOP RATS FROM GETTING IN

Keep them out.

Rodent-proof your building. Build in features that keep rodents out. Make the building easier to clean, and reduce food and nesting material. Trim trees and shrubs so they are 3 to 6 feet away from buildings and keep vines off building walls. This will stop rats from climbing onto the roof and getting inside.

Keep things clean.

Deny them food. Clean up food scraps. Assign areas for eating and keep food and beverages there.

CLEANING UP & MAKING REPAIRS

Indoors

- Seal all electrical conduits, heating ducts, pipes, and pipe chases. Don't seal potential rodent entry points with materials they can gnaw, like rubber, plastic, or wood.
- Weatherstrip doors and windows, and install door sweeps.
- Repair all broken panes in windows or skylights.
- Keep indoor garbage in lined, covered containers and empty every day.

Outdoors

- Make sure all outdoor garbage containers have plastic liners and tight-fitting, spring-loaded lids. Don't let garbage spill over the container.
- Raise trash receptacles off the ground where you can. Place on hard, cleanable surfaces at least 50 feet from building entrances.
- Clean all garbage containers regularly. Wash outdoor garbage containers often, including spills around the containers.
- Collect and move recyclables and stored waste off site at least once a week.

IN THE GARDEN & PLAYGROUND

- Avoid planting fruit-bearing trees—the fruit attracts roof rats. Harvest fruit, including citrus, before you start a rat feeding frenzy.
- Don't put plants directly against buildings because this provides shelter and runways for rodents. Keep tree limbs and branches at least six feet away from the outside of buildings. Don't let vines climb the walls of a building. Rats and mice can climb up the wall using the vines.
- Thin out or get rid of dense ground covers such as ivy. Dense ground covers create a perfect place for rats and mice to live.

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WHAT IS INTEGRATED PEST MANAGEMENT (IPM)?

Integrated pest management is a widely accepted approach toward pest management that results in effective suppression of pest populations while minimizing hazards to human health and the environment.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Visit DPR's school IPM Web site at www.cdpr.ca.gov/schoolipm/childcare/main.cfm. For additional information about mice and rats see the link to UC IPM's Pest Notes #7483 and #74106. For help identifying rodents, see www.ipm.ucdavis.edu and click on "Homes, structures, people, and pets."



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