

Note: When there is an infestation of mice that the homeowner is unable to control, then the homeowner should hire the services of a licensed pest control operator.

Deer Mice and Hantavirus

The only confirmed carrier of hantavirus is the deer mouse. Humans can be infected with hantavirus if they are exposed to grossly contaminated situations (e.g. large accumulations of mouse droppings in garages, sheds or barns). Hantavirus causes a serious form of respiratory illness in humans. The first symptoms of hantavirus pulmonary syndrome (HPS) are similar to those of the flu (cough, fever of 101°F to 104°F (38.3°C to 40°C), headache and muscle pains). Hantavirus infection progresses from these symptoms to severe difficulty in breathing (fluid buildup in the lungs). Anyone who develops flu-like symptoms accompanied by difficulty in breathing should see a doctor immediately.



Deer Mouse
(*Peromyscus maniculatus*)

Deer mice are reddish-brown in colour (in some cases pale grey) with a white neck, chest and feet. The tail is bi-coloured; brown on top and white on the bottom. Deer mice have much larger (prominent) ears and eyes than house mice. Because it is possible that other rodents could carry hantavirus, all mice and droppings should be treated as potential carriers.

Differences Between House Mice & Deer Mice

	House Mouse	Deer Mouse
Colour	Greyish to light brown on top; light brown underside.	Reddish-brown to pale grey on top; has a white belly and feet.
Tail	Less hairy, scales present on tail.	Furry tail; brown on top and white on the underside.
Ears, Eyes	Small ears and eyes.	Larger prominent ears and eyes.
Size	Smaller than deer mouse.	The body weight of an adult deer mouse is 50% greater than that of a house mouse.

Public Health Division
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House Mouse (*Mus musculus*)



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Environmental Public Health Services

For more information, please contact your nearest Environmental Public Health Services office.

Edmonton Main Office	(780) 413-7928
Capital Health Centre - South Tower	(780) 735-1400
Strathcona	(780) 342-4661
Spruce Grove	(780) 962-7509
Leduc	(780) 980-4644
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EPHB-00-005
Created: Jul/01
Revised: Jul/06
Updated: Sept/08



Description

The house mouse has short, small feet and a tail that is as long as the head and body combined. Although usually a dark grey colour, some house mice have light brown backs and their bellies are light brown (not white). When fully grown, they weigh about 15 grams (1/2 oz.) and are 8 cm (3 inches) long.

Females produce from six to ten litters a year with about five offspring per litter. The average life span of a house mouse is about one year.

Habits

Mice usually enter homes in the fall and winter looking for food and shelter. They enter buildings through holes or gaps in doors, walls and foundations. A mouse can squeeze through a crack as small as 10 mm (3/8 inch).



The presence of droppings near food, under stoves, refrigerators, under sinks and finding holes in boxes and bags containing food or garbage are indications of mouse activity. Mice also cause damage by gnawing on insulation and building material, furniture, paper, clothing and books.

Mice contaminate food with their urine, hair and droppings. They may transmit diseases such as Murine typhus, leptospirosis and salmonellosis (food poisoning). Mice also carry parasites such as fleas, round worms and mites (the cause of Rickettsial pox).

Control

Good housekeeping and sanitation practices will help prevent mice from becoming established in a building. Once mice have entered a building, all foods should be protected (e.g. store cereals and dry foods in containers with secure lids).

To control mice infestations, the best approach is an integrated management program. This involves using physical and chemical means of control.

Mouse-proofing involves sealing openings around pipes, doors, windows and holes in walls, foundations or other points of entry.

Mouse Traps

Trapping is preferred when the use of poison baits (rodenticides) is unsafe. Poison baits are not recommended in food areas or in places accessible to children or pets.

Several types of mechanical devices can be used to catch mice, and one of the most effective methods is the use of ready-to-use glue boards. When mice try to cross the boards, their feet become stuck and they are unable to free themselves. Glue boards are scented or can be baited (e.g. with peanut butter).

Snap traps, available in hardware stores, are also effective if they are baited and set properly. Dried fruit, peanut butter or marshmallows are excellent baits. Glue boards and snap traps should be placed across mouse runways or corners, and must be checked frequently.



Precautions When Handling Dead Mice & Droppings

Assume all dead mice, traps, their droppings/urine and nesting material are infectious. Infested areas should first be aired-out by opening windows and doors for 30 minutes. When cleaning a heavily infested area, wear an appropriate face mask filter and do not dry sweep or vacuum droppings and nesting material. Dead mice, nesting material and droppings should be flooded with a disinfectant or household bleach solution (1 ½ cups of bleach per gallon of water, i.e. 1/10 dilution) and cleaned up with a wet paper towel. Use latex or rubber gloves or inverted plastic bags when cleaning up or handling such items. Dead and trapped mice, nesting material, droppings and cleaning materials should be disposed of in a sealed plastic bag and discarded outside in a garbage container. Before removing gloves, wash gloved hands in the disinfectant solution.

Rodenticides

When traps are not successful in capturing mice, then poison bait (rodenticide) should be used as part of the control program. Most ready-to-use commercial baits contain anticoagulant rodenticides. They cause death as a result of internal bleeding, which occurs when the capillaries are destroyed. Hemorrhage can occur in any part of the body.

All poison baits should be placed where only mice can get them. Keep them out of reach of pets and children. Label directions on all rodenticides should be followed carefully.