

## Pest control information – mice

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### Introduction

The Prevention of Damage by Pests Act 1949 places a duty on owners and occupiers of property to keep their land free from rodents and a duty on the Council to ensure that owners and occupiers fulfil their duty.

**If owners and occupiers fail in their obligations under the Act, formal action may be taken against them by the Council and/or they may be required to engage a private contractor.**

### About Mice

The two types of mice found in Britain that may become pests are the House Mouse and the Longtailed Field Mouse. Mice, like rats are also a major hazard to health as they can spread disease and can contaminate food. Apart from causing food damage due to their gnawing action, they can also cause considerable structural damage. However, unlike rats they are less dependent on water and will normally obtain sufficient moisture from their food.

### Description

The two types of mice in Britain that can become pests are:

- The house mouse
- The long-tailed field mouse

The adult house mouse may weight up to ½oz (15gm); usually has brown fur on its back and is grey underneath; its ears are fairly large in relation to its body and its feet are small. The tail is the same length as the head and body but is much thinner than the tail of a young rat.

## Distribution

Mice are widely distributed throughout urban areas and in farm buildings. The long-tailed field mouse is common on agricultural land but is not generally considered a pest unless it takes up residence indoors.

The house mouse is a more common domestic pest which will nest in partitions, floors and behind wall boarding. Mice are most active at night and will range over a very small area if food is plentiful. They are less dependent on water and will normally obtain sufficient moisture from their food.

## Significance

Mice, like rats, are a major hazard to health. They are responsible for the spread of many diseases, some of which can be fatal to man. They eat food which may be intended for human consumption and contaminate much more, with their urine, droppings and fur, which must then be disposed of. Mice will also cause structural damage to property by gnawing through woodwork, wires, pipes and household items.

## Life Cycle

The life expectancy of mice is around one year during which time a female may breed up to six times. The average size of a litter is six. Breeding occurs throughout the year but especially in the Spring and Autumn.

## What to look out for?

There are some simple tell-tale signs to look out for that will reveal whether you have mice in your home:

- damage from gnawing and feeding such as tooth marks on packaging and wires;
- small holes - mouse holes are 20mm in diameter;
- greasy smears along walls, skirting boards and pipes from rodent fur;
- droppings - mouse droppings are normally about 5mm long, and are dark brown or black. A mouse can produce up to 80 droppings a day;
- nests (sometimes found indoors, in lofts or under floorboards);and
- scratching and gnawing sounds from the loft, under the floorboards and in wall cavities

## Control

You will need professional help in controlling colonies of mice. They are particularly difficult to control because of the rate at which they breed and are able to colonise new areas.

Householders can assist in preventing infestation by some simple measures:

- Keeping your house and particularly the kitchen clean and tidy. Regularly cleaning up any food debris and crumbs from behind and underneath kitchen work surfaces, cupboards and appliances.
- Keeping your home in good repair so that mice cannot gain access to it, (mice can through the smallest hole).
- Fill in any gaps around any pipework to the outside of the building and cover any ventilation grills or air-bricks with a fine metal mesh.
- Ensure that no food is left around the house or garden to prevent mice from being encouraged onto your property.

In the event of infestation, our Pest Control Officers will survey the area to determine the size of the colony and the most appropriate control measures.

Poison baits will normally be laid where mice have been active. The bait should be left undisturbed until our officers return to assess the effectiveness of the treatment.

## Safety

All pesticides are applied by our qualified and experienced staff to ensure the safety of the public and to minimise damage to the environment.