

Homeowner's Guide to Mouse Prevention

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Mice are the most common household rodent in Minnesota, and they're more than just a nuisance. A mouse infestation can cause serious damage to your home, put your family's health at risk, and quickly grow out of control. This guide will help you identify the warning signs, understand the dangers, and take practical steps to prevent mice from invading your home.

Why a Mouse Infestation is Serious

Health Hazards

- Food contamination: A mouse produces 50–75 droppings daily and has no bladder control, often near food or prep areas. Mice spread contamination when urine or droppings come into contact with food, countertops, and utensils. Even dried droppings can become airborne as dust and be inhaled, spreading disease without direct contact.”
- Diseases spread by mice:
 - *Salmonella*: Causes food poisoning symptoms (nausea, diarrhea).
 - *Hantavirus*: Rare but potentially fatal respiratory disease.
 - *Lymphocytic choriomeningitis virus (LCMV)*: Can cause flu-like illness and serious risks for pregnant women.

- Allergies & asthma: Proteins in mouse urine and dander can trigger attacks, especially in children.

Property Damage

- Gnawing behavior: Keeps their constantly growing teeth in check.
- Damage caused: Electrical wiring, insulation, furniture, and drywall.
- Fire risk: According to NFPA and insurance studies, rodents (primarily mice) are suspected in up to 20–25% of fires of unknown origin due to chewed wiring.



Mouse Biology & Habits

- **Size & agility:** Can squeeze through gaps as small as ¼ inch.
- **Vision:** Poor eyesight, but excellent sense of smell, hearing, and touch.
- **Behavior:** Travel along walls and edges (“thigmotaxis”), rarely across open spaces.
- **Nocturnal activity:** Most active at night, which is why scratching sounds are common after dark.
- **Reproduction:** A pair of mice can produce 6–10 litters per year, each with 5–12 pups.

How to Recognize a Mouse Infestation

Look for these common signs in your home:

- **Droppings:** Small, dark pellets often found in kitchens, pantries, or along walls.
- **Gnaw Marks:** On food packaging, wood, cardboard, or wires.
- **Nesting Materials:** Shredded paper, fabric, or insulation in secluded areas.
- **Noises:** Scratching or scurrying in walls or ceilings at night.
- **Odor:** A strong, musky smell from urine and nesting areas.
- **Grease marks:** Oily smudge marks along walls or baseboards from their fur.

- Tracks: Tiny footprints and tail marks visible in dusty areas. You can check for tracks by sprinkling a thin layer of talcum or baby powder in suspected areas.

Tip: Seeing one mouse often means more are hiding nearby.



How to Prevent Mice from Entering Your Home

Seal Entry Points

- Where to look:
 - Foundation cracks, brick gaps, sill plates.
 - Changes in siding, along fireplaces, and facades
 - Around utility penetrations (plumbing, cable, gas lines, dryer vents).
 - Roofline gaps, attic vents, plumbing vents, chimney caps, and overhanging trees.
 - Under doors and garage doors.



- How to test: Use a pencil — if it fits, a mouse can squeeze through.
- Materials to use:
 - *Steel wool*: Effective but best combined with caulk or expanding foam to hold it in place.
 - *Copper mesh*: Longer-lasting than steel wool (won't rust).
 - *Hardware cloth* (¼-inch galvanized): For larger gaps or vents.
 - *Door sweeps and weatherstripping*: For thresholds and garage doors.



Eliminate Food Sources

- Store food and pet food in sealed containers.
- Clean crumbs and spills promptly.
- Empty garbage cans regularly and use tight-fitting lids.

Remove Shelter

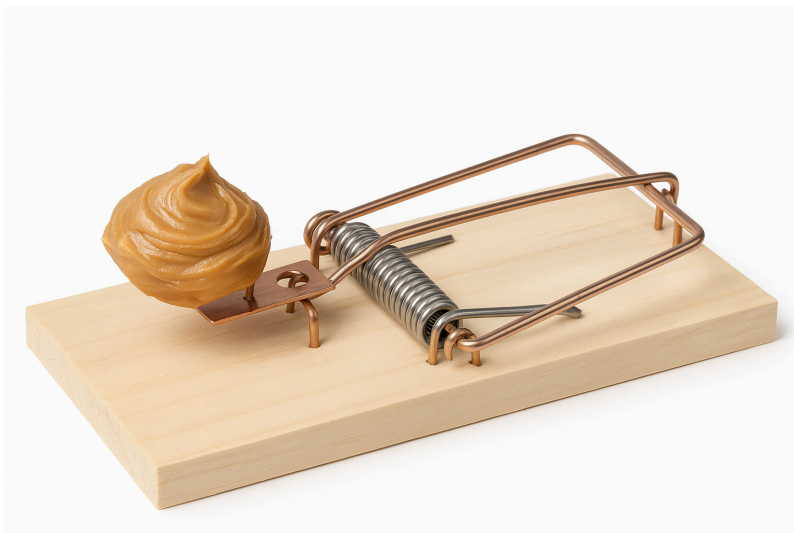
- Reduce clutter in basements, attics, and garages.
- Store firewood off the ground and away from the house.
- Trim vegetation that provides cover along exterior walls.



Regular Home Maintenance

- Inspect the foundation, roofline, and utility penetrations seasonally.
- Repair gaps around pipes, cables, and vents.
- Keep dryer vents and exhaust fans properly screened.

Trapping and Poisons: Do's and Don'ts



Trapping (preferred DIY method)

- **Snap traps:** Most effective; use multiple traps at once.
- **Placement:** Along walls, behind appliances, under sinks — with the baited end touching the wall.
- **Effective baits:** Peanut butter, chocolate, or nesting materials (cotton). *Tip: Use gloves when setting traps to minimize human scent.*
- **Check traps daily:** Dispose of captured mice promptly. Always wear gloves when handling traps or carcasses, and place used materials in sealed plastic bags before discarding in outdoor trash bins.

Poisons (rodenticides – cautions)

- **Don't** use rodenticides in open areas inside the home — risk to kids, pets, and secondary poisoning.
- **Do** use anchored tamper-resistant bait stations if rodenticides are necessary outdoors.
- **Downside:** Mice may die in inaccessible places (walls/attics), leading to odors.

What To Do if Prevention Isn't Enough



- If you continue to find droppings, hear activity, or see damage despite DIY efforts.
- If infestations occur repeatedly — it could indicate hidden structural vulnerabilities.
- If you're concerned about family health, pets, or structural fire risks.
- Professional help ensures safe, thorough elimination and prevention.

Quick Reference Checklist

- ✓ Inspect foundation, roofline, and utility penetrations for gaps
- ✓ Seal openings with copper mesh, hardware cloth, or caulk + steel wool

- ✓ Store food in airtight containers
- ✓ Reduce clutter indoors and outdoors
- ✓ Place snap traps along walls at the first signs of activity
- ✓ Call a professional if DIY efforts fail or infestation is widespread

Conclusion

By understanding mouse behavior and taking proactive steps, homeowners can significantly reduce the risk of infestation. Prevention through exclusion, sanitation, and vigilance is the key — but if activity persists, don't wait for a small problem to turn into a large one.



<https://www.adamspestcontrol.com/pest/mice/>

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