

KEEP

# RATS AND MICE OUT OF YOUR HOME

## CONTROL RATS AND MICE IN YOUR HOME WITH THESE ECO-FRIENDLY PRODUCTS

Snap traps	Victor Rat Traps, Victor Mouse Traps
Electrocution traps	Rat Zapper, Raticator Plus Rodent Trap, Victor Electronic Mouse Trap, Victor Electronic Rat Trap

How do you know whether you have a rodent problem? You may see a mouse or rat, smell them, or hear them chewing and scampering at night in walls and ceilings. Look for droppings, signs of gnawing, and the nests rats and mice make from shredded paper, cloth, or insulation. You may find rat burrows in the ground outside.

## GET RID OF RODENTS

- **Set traps.** Use snap traps or battery-operated electrocution traps instead of glue boards. Glue-trapped animals don't die immediately; the glue boards may catch other animals (such as cats) that try to eat the trapped rodents. (See *Tips for Using Traps*.)
- **Remove or clean up food that attracted the rodents.** Remove clutter.
- **Don't leave dirty dishes in the sink**—either wash or keep them in the dishwasher with the door closed.
- **Keep food (for people and pets) in the refrigerator or in containers made of glass, metal, or heavy plastic with tight-fitting lids.** Store birdseed, and grass seed in pest-proof containers.
- **Remove and clean pet dishes after pets have eaten.** Do not leave pet food out over night, especially outside.
- **Empty garbage often.** Outside, keep trash and recycling in rodent-proof cans with closed, tight-fitting lids.
- **Fix leaking faucets and pipes**—rats and mice get thirsty too.

There are plenty of reasons why it's important to keep rodents out of and away from your home. Rats and mice can bring fleas, ticks, and germs that carry diseases. Rodents and their droppings can make allergies and asthma worse. Rats and mice will eat and contaminate your food, damage property, and can even cause fires by chewing on electrical wires in your walls or attic.

## KEEP THEM AWAY!

Trapping alone will not solve your rat or mouse problem long-term. You must also take steps to keep other rats or mice from getting into your home.

### Seal holes and cracks

Since a mouse can squeeze through a hole as thin as a pencil, and both rats and mice can chew a small hole into a larger one, be sure to seal or close off all cracks and crevices.

- **Close off large holes with sheet metal flashing, 1/4" hardware cloth, plaster, or mortar.** Stuff scouring pads or knitted copper mesh into large gaps. Don't use steel wool for this—it will rust and eventually allow the rodents to get back in.
- **Seal smaller holes with caulk, spackle, or cement.**
- **Make sure there are no gaps around windows and doors.** Use weather stripping and door sweeps if needed, and repair thresholds and windowsills. Keep outside doors and screen doors closed, especially at night.

## DON'T GIVE RODENTS A PLACE TO HIDE

- **Throw away materials that rodents could use to make nests,** like shredded paper, cotton or polyester batting, foam rubber, insulation, rags, and string—or keep in pest-proof containers.



## Outside

- Remove woodpiles, rock piles, and other debris piles. Store firewood and lumber at least 18" above the ground and 18" away from all structures.
- Thin dense bushes and shrubs and remove heavy vine growth. Make sure tree and shrub branches are at least three feet away from buildings.
- Get rid of ivy. Ivy provides shelter and food for rats. If you can't remove it, cut it close to the ground.
- Use rodent-proof compost bins and never put meat in the compost.
- Standing water attracts thirsty rodents (and breeds mosquitoes). Turn over empty flower pots, and remove tires stored outdoors or drill holes in them so water can drain.

## CLEANING UP ONCE THEY'RE GONE

- If you find a nest, put on rubber gloves and place the nest and droppings in a plastic bag, along with any material the rodents may have touched. Seal the bag and put it in the trash.
- Wash any surface where rodents have been with soapy water to get rid of food residue, pest saliva, droppings, and urine, and then wipe the surface with a disinfectant containing hydrogen peroxide. If you have asthma, you should wear a dust mask.

## IF YOU CALL A PROFESSIONAL

Call a pest management professional (PMP) that offers less-toxic solutions to all pest problems (integrated pest management, or IPM).

- Ask for a thorough inspection to find out where rodents are getting in and what they are eating.
- Ask the PMP to try trapping rodents before using poisons that are bad for people, pets, and the environment.
- Whatever method they use, make sure the company will return to remove dead rodents.
- Insist on pest-proofing services, such as blocking rodent entry points.

For a listing of pest control companies providing IPM services, go to [www.ecowisecertified.org](http://www.ecowisecertified.org) or [www.greenshieldcertified.org](http://www.greenshieldcertified.org).

## TIPS FOR USING TRAPS

Electrocution traps are effective—and more humane than snap traps. These battery-operated traps (not to be confused with ultrasonic devices) ensure that rodents die quickly and also make getting rid of dead animals easier.

Snap traps come in different sizes for rats and mice. Use a trap rated for rats for roof rats (which sometimes are mistaken for mice, as they are grey and "cuter" than Norway rats). A too-small trap may only wound the animal. Always keep snap traps out of the reach of children and pets.

Mice are easy to trap using peanut butter as bait. Trapping rats takes more patience.

- Get rats used to eating from the trap for a few nights by placing the bait on the trigger without setting the spring.
- Set the spring only after you are sure the rats are taking the bait.
- Check traps daily and put dead rodents and snap traps in plastic bags, seal them, and throw them in the outside trash. Protect yourself by wearing rubber gloves, and try not to touch the animal. If you have asthma, you may want to wear a dust mask.

If you don't succeed, you may need to hire a pest management professional.

## About poison baits

- Poison baits should be used only by a PMP and only as a last resort or in an emergency. Not only is there a danger of directly poisoning people or pets, but animals (such as outdoor cats) that eat poisoned mice or rats can also be killed. With very bad rodent problems, poisoned animals may die behind walls, causing odors and breeding flies.
- Make sure your PMP uses only locking, tamper-resistant bait stations.
- Ask the PMP not to use rodent baits that are no longer allowed for use by consumers, containing bromadiolone, brodifacoum, difenacoum, or difethialone. These chemicals kill pets, birds, and wildlife.



[WWW.OURWATEROURWORLD.ORG](http://WWW.OURWATEROURWORLD.ORG)

Common home and garden pesticides are found in stormwater runoff, treated wastewater, and in local waterways, sometimes at levels that can harm sensitive aquatic life. Our Water Our World is a joint effort by water pollution prevention agencies, participating retail stores, and pesticide distributors and manufacturers—working together to reduce the risks associated with pesticide use.

Our Water Our World fact sheets and store displays educate residents about less-toxic pest management. For the rest of the series of fact sheets, visit [www.OurWaterOurWorld.org](http://www.OurWaterOurWorld.org). Look for the *Less Toxic • Eco-friendly* tag next to less-toxic products in participating stores and nurseries. See the *Pesticides and Water Pollution* fact sheet for information on active ingredients in common pesticides that may cause water quality problems.

Pest control strategies and methods described in this publication are consistent with integrated pest management (IPM) concepts, and are based on scientific studies and tests in actual home and garden settings. Use suggested products according to label directions and dispose of unwanted or leftover pesticides at a household hazardous waste collection facility or event. For more information on pesticide disposal, visit [www.earth911.com](http://www.earth911.com). No endorsement of specific brand name products is intended, nor is criticism implied of similar products that are not mentioned.

For more information, contact:

Bio-Integral Resource Center (BIRC), 510.524.2567, [www.birc.org](http://www.birc.org)

University of California Cooperative Extension Master Gardeners in your area

University of California IPM website, [www.ipm.ucdavis.edu](http://www.ipm.ucdavis.edu)