

## News Release

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### **Yikes! There's a Mouse in the House!**

UNIVERSITY PARK, Pa. – The weather outside is getting colder, and pests like house mice are looking for a warm place with food and water to hole up for the winter. Guess what? Your house may be looking like a five-star resort to these pests!

Mice that infest houses are typically five to eight inches long (including the tail), light gray, brown or black with a lighter belly. They also have a long, hairless tail and large ears. They may look cute, but watch out, mice can carry Salmonella, a bacteria that causes food poisoning. Recently, Hantavirus, a potentially deadly organism has been discovered in the urine, droppings and saliva of mice. Mice can also transmit other nasty parasites to humans and pets such as ringworm, mites, tapeworms and ticks. In addition, they urinate over several thousand times a day!

You may find evidence of mice at any time of the year, but you are more likely to spot them in the fall when they are looking for the things mice need to survive, such as food, water and shelter. They can wiggle their way into the tiniest of openings around windows, doors, roofs, piping, and air ducts. Any hole you can stick a pencil in is an entry way for a mouse! That's why Lyn Garling, program manager with the Pennsylvania IPM Program, recommends using IPM to safely eliminate these and other pests:

**Step One:** Find out what kind of pests you have to make sure they *are* mice and where they are coming from.

- Look for holes in walls that are ringed with a dirty, oily rubbing.
- Look around the outside of the house to determine how the mice may have originally gained access.

**Step Two:** All pests look for food, water and/or shelter. If you understand what they want, you can take it away. This is the most important step in IPM and prevention!

- Clean up food scraps and store foods appropriately to prevent easy access to food. All pet foods should be stored off the floor and in sealed hard containers with tight-fitting lids.
- Keep living areas clean and uncluttered.
- Keep yards and vacant lots maintained by mowing and utilizing regular trash pickup.
- Repair holes and cracks in walls, windows, and screens.
- Seal routes of pest entry using caulking, copper mesh, or other pest-proof materials for gaps in walls, pipes, pavement and other surfaces.

- Share information with neighbors. Pests like mice do not stay in one place.

**Step Three:** Set mouse traps in those areas where most of the mice droppings are found.

- Bait the snap traps with peanut butter, place them facing the wall and remove any captured mice by picking the trap up using a plastic bag turned inside-out. Use a series of traps where the mice are being caught.
- Disinfect the site with bleach or another disinfecting solution.
- It is not advisable to use rodent baits in residential settings due to the risks of poisoning children and pets, and the potential for rodents to die in walls or other enclosed areas. The trapped rodents will smell and attract other pests.
- If you do use a bait, make sure it is not the pellet kind. Use the solid block type with a hole drilled through so it can be tied down. It is preferable to place the bait within a bait box.

For more information on house mice and other animal pests, go the Pennsylvania IPM Program's Pest Problem Solver at <http://paipm.cas.psu.edu/481.htm>, or go to <http://resources.cas.psu.edu/ipm/schoolmn/rodents.pdf>.

The Pennsylvania IPM program is a collaboration between the Pennsylvania State University and the Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture aimed at promoting integrated pest management in both agricultural and urban situations. For more information, contact the program at (814) 865-2839, or visit Web site <http://paipm.cas.psu.edu>. To view our archived news releases, see Web site <http://paipm.cas.psu.edu/10.html>.