

## **MICE - Pest Control Advice**

House mice are well adapted to living in close contact with humans and are able to live in almost any available space. They can squeeze through extremely small openings, living and breeding under floors, in cavity walls, ceiling voids and behind skirting boards. They can also cause extensive damage to property. They are capable of gnawing a range of materials, including electric wiring, which can cause a fire risk.

### **Prevention of damage**

It is possible to prevent or at least reduce the chances of mice becoming established and causing damage by ensuring that homes do not provide suitable environments for mice to live and breed. Two of the most important areas to consider in this respect are proofing and hygiene.

#### **Proofing**

Preventing mice from gaining access to buildings will reduce the chances of them becoming established. Buildings can be proofed by blocking openings through which mice can enter. Check that air bricks are in place and intact (do not block them), and inspect for access points around gas, electricity and water pipes. Check that doors fit tightly. Such action helps to prevent mice entering from outside and will limit their movement between properties.

#### **Hygiene**

Improved hygiene will restrict the availability of food for mice, reducing the chances that they will remain at that site and breed successfully. Examples of how hygiene can be improved are:

- Keeping food in mouse-proof containers
- Sweeping up any spillages as soon as they occur
- Not leaving food intended for pets lying around
- Removing rubbish and other materials that can be utilised by mice
- Cleaning up under work units and other areas where food residues can accumulate.

### **Control Measures**

House mouse problems will sometimes occur despite hygiene and proofing action. In such circumstances, it will be necessary to take control measures in order to eliminate the infestation. There are two methods of control available:

- Trapping
- Poison baiting

#### **Trapping**

Traditional break-back traps can be used successfully, particularly if there are only a few mice involved. To be effective, they must be sited and set correctly. They should be placed about two metres (six feet) apart or closer if circumstances require, and in areas where mice are known to be moving. Mice tend to move along the base of walls, so the trap should be positioned with the baited or treadle end of the trap against the wall, across the routes that the mice will be using.

Place the trap in a position where it cannot be accidentally set off by children or pets but allow sufficient space around the trap to enable it to function without catching on any obstructions. Baits do not have to be used on the trap in every case but are sometimes beneficial. Consider using foodstuffs on which mice are already feeding. Examples of suitable baits include biscuit, porridge oats, other cereals and chocolate.

Check the traps daily until no more mice are caught and activity ceases. If a mouse is alive in the trap kill it quickly with a blow to the head. Dead mice should be burned or buried.

### Poison Baiting

A range of rodenticides is available for use against mice. It is important to read the label and follow the instructions so that treatments are safe and effective. Mice like to feed from a number of different places. Providing the label instructions are complied with, small amounts of bait should be placed in a large number of locations. This is more likely to be effective than restricting baits to only a few points. Regularly inspect the baits and replace any that have been eaten. It may take several weeks to achieve effective control.

### Safety Precautions

Rodenticides are poisonous to humans, livestock and wildlife as well as to mice. Always read and follow label instructions before use.

When handling any pesticide, use appropriate protective clothing and equipment, as indicated on the product label instructions. If you think that you have become ill as a result of handling rodenticides, seek medical advice immediately. Keeping a record of which rodenticides have been used, provides important information for medical and veterinary services. Where appropriate, inform site occupiers or others of the measures that have been taken and the action required in case of accidental poisoning.

When using rodenticide concentrates, do not be tempted to increase the concentrations of rodenticide in baits. This is illegal and likely to reduce the palatability of the baits, and it poses a greater threat to other species.

Ensure baits are placed so that they are not accessible to children and animals; all reasonable precautions must be taken to ensure that livestock are kept away from treatment areas. Pigs and dogs are especially prone to poisoning by anticoagulants.

When treatments are completed, all uneaten bait should be disposed of safely according to label instructions, usually by burying or burning. Dead rodents should be disposed of in a similar manner, and care must be taken when handling carcasses.

Rodenticide baits should be kept safely locked away and any equipment used to mix or dispense bait should be washed after use. Empty containers should also be washed out thoroughly after use and disposed of safely. Avoid contamination of ponds, ditches or waterways.

The Council's Environmental Services Division provides a mice control service (for a fee). Please telephone 01293 438000 for an appointment.