

MOUSE IN THE HOUSE?



Mice are vectors which can transmit diseases such as Salmonella through their hair, feces, and urine. In this tight economy, mouse infestations in restaurants may increase because of the expenses associated with pest control and repairs. The safest and most cost-effective way to handle a mouse problem is to prevent it in the first place.

Mice live in wall cavities, roof spaces, and even below floorboards. They can squeeze through an opening the size of a dime. To prevent entry into your establishment:

- Keep doors closed at all times. Make sure doors fit tightly so that no daylight is visible on the sides or bottom. A solid rubber sweep is a good way to seal off the bottom of solid or screened doors.
- Keep food in tightly sealed containers.
- Eliminate holes and gaps in interior walls. Inspect your facility often for holes, gaps at floor/wall junctures, and spaces around pipes that protrude through walls.
- Make sure floors and equipment are cleaned every day to eliminate food residue. A clean facility will eliminate the food source for rodents.

Since mice are most active at night, you could have an infestation and never see a single mouse. Be aware of signs indicating mice in your facility:

- Mice do not see well and rely on feel and smell to move around. Because of this, they tend to move along walls. Be sure to check the floor along the walls for mouse droppings (feces) every day. The droppings are dark brown/black and are about as long as a grain of rice.
- Mice are good climbers and can even climb walls if they are rough. Check all shelving and drawers for droppings.
- Mice will gnaw on baseboards, food packing, etc. Check for signs of gnawing on baseboards, food packaging, etc.

Keep the exterior of your facility neat, clean, and free of food and harborage sources. Keep dumpsters closed. Keep the perimeter of the building foundation clear so burrows can be observed if present.

If you have a mouse problem at your facility, **do not use poison!** Poison can cause a serious, potentially lethal hazard. Plus, the mouse will take the poison, go back to its hiding space and die and your new problem will be the odor of mouse carcasses! Instead, conduct a thorough inspection and correct any items as noted above. Clean up any mouse droppings. If they re-appear, contact a Department of Agriculture-certified Pest Control Operator (PCO).

Ideally, a PCO should be contracted to do routine surveillance of your facility for insects and rodents. Pesticides should be used on a limited basis, targeted to the type of pest identified, and only used by the certified PCO in a safe manner.

With prevention, monitoring, and swift action, pests can be kept in check, eliminating a potential health hazard at your facility.