

Mice and rats require four simple things to survive: food; water, nesting (harborage) and safe travel (between their nest and food). However, once these comforts are eliminated, so to are mice and rats. The information provided in this fact sheet will help you prevent and eliminate infestation.



Self Inspection

Start by taking a walk around the outside of your house or complex. You should be looking for:

- Open or broken windows and screens
- Voids in the staircase or wooden outdoor floorboards
- Cracks or holes in the foundation walls
- Gaps around piping or conduits
- Potential nesting sites under decks
- Loose fitting or damaged doors
- Damage or openings at corners of house
- Openings around chimney caps

Sanitation

Poor sanitation also provides food and favorable nesting sites for mice and rats. During your walk be sure to look out for:

Outside

- Open or loosely covered trash containers or dumpsters
- Overgrowth of shrubs, foliage or vegetation next to or near the house or complex
- Accumulation of wood, lumber or pipes
- Accumulation of debris, junk, rags, discarded bedding or furniture
- Poorly maintained compost bin
- Exposed pet food
- Poorly maintained bird feeders

Inside

- Accumulation of debris and junk in the attic, basement or crawl space
- Leaking pipes or broken spigots
- Open bags or containers of food
- General cleanliness

Elimination/Exclusion

After identifying problem areas, take the following measures to make your house or apartment complex uninviting to mice or rats:

Outside

- Install tight-fitting windows and screens
- Seal or remove voids in the staircase or wooden outdoor floor boards
- Seal any cracks or holes in the foundation walls
- Seal gaps around piping or conduits
- Seal open spaces under decks
- Repair or replace loose-fitting doors
- Repair any damaged areas of the doors with metal flashing
- Seal any openings on the house siding
- Screen openings around chimney caps
- Provide cleanable, tightly covered trash containers and dumpsters
- Maintain or remove any shrubs, foliage or vegetation
- Store wood, lumber or pipes at least 12 inches off the ground or dispose of properly
- Properly dispose of debris, rags, discarded bedding or furniture
- Follow the proper procedures for maintaining a compost bin
- Do not leave pet food sitting out. Provide tightly covered containers and properly discard the leftovers
- Bird seed should not be scattered on the ground

Inside

- Properly store or dispose of debris, etc
- Repair leaking pipes or broken spigots
- Food should be stored in sealed packages or covered containers
- Kitchen and pantry should be kept clean and free of food debris

Remember, removal of harborage and permanent sources of food will eliminate existing rat and mouse populations.

Contact your Area Sanitarian if you have any questions about your specific pest control problem.

Also see: Municipal Rodent Management on the Illinois Department of Public Health Web site.