

Mice & Rats

- Known as “commensal rodents”, the **house Mouse** (*Mus musculus*), **Roof Rat** (*Rattus rattus*), and **Norway Rat** (*Rattus norvegicus*) – are not considered wildlife under the *BC Wildlife Act*; although there are other rodent species in BC (e.g. deer mice)
- BC mice and rats are not known to carry rabies



Norway Rat

Understanding Mice & Rats

Norway rats – also known as brown, sewer or wharf rats – are ground dwellers. Roof rats – also known as black or ship rats – are accomplished climbers that prefer trees and high structures. House mice are drawn to structures that provide warm, secure, and comfortable shelter. These commensal rodents can carry and transmit diseases; but native deer mice are the most common carriers of hantavirus. Commensal rodents are named for their close association to humans, and reliance on them for food and shelter.

Common Conflicts

Commensal rodents contaminate stored food with droppings, nest in structures, gnaw on wires, insulation, or wood, and burrow in yards. When populations are large, they create health and safety concerns.

Humane Choices

The solution to rodent control is managing the environments that sustain them.

For human health and safety, sometimes killing rodents may be necessary. These animals have the same capacity to suffer as any other animal, so killing methods should cause the least harm to the animal's welfare.

The BC SPCA strongly encourages non-lethal, non-contact methods. Prevention and exclusion should be in place before killing. If attractants are not removed more rodents may arrive, so follow-up monitoring is needed.



Mice

Did you know?

Rodents are social, curious and shy. They make a wide variety of noises to communicate, and rats will even take care of sick or injured rats in their group.

Mice and Rats...

- have many litters of 3-9 babies per year
- babies leave the nest at 2-3 weeks old and are weaned by 3-4 weeks
- mice mostly eat seeds, grains and nuts
- rats are omnivorous, and eat a wide variety of plant or animal matter
- rats need access to water for drinking, but mice do not if their food is moist enough
- are a major food source for animals like owls, hawks, and coyotes

Conflict Resolution

For information on managing mice and rats, *flip this page over*. Glue traps are legal and widely used, but they are inhumane, can accidentally catch many other types of animals, and should not be used to kill, though they are the only legal option in commercial food facilities. **Glue traps should only be used by professionals**, because homeowners will not have a method to kill animals found alive.



Recommended Actions & Methods

Prevention & Exclusion
Before any conflict, and
to prevent future issues

Remove potential food sources

- ✓ Secure garbage bins and compost
- ✓ Bird feeders not overflowing, no pet food outside
- ✓ Food stored in rodent-proof containers
- ✓ Clean spilled food, waste, crumbs, etc.

Maintain residential structures

- ➔ To find entry, sprinkle powder on perimeters and look for tracks
- ✓ Seal gaps larger than a dime (mice) or quarter (rats) with heavy gauge screening or 0.5cm hardware cloth or metal mesh
- ✓ Remove wood and brush piles, trim plants back from foundations
- ✓ To confirm rat burrow use – loosely cover hole with leaves, newspaper or straw; if present, rat can push it away and re-open
- ✓ Material should be undisturbed for 2-3 nights before closing hole

Low health/safety risk
Few animals, rarely seen

Evict the animal

- ✓ Rats: install one-way door so rat can leave, but not re-enter
- ✓ Live trap using cage or tip trap, release animal outside nearby
- ✓ Follow all prevention and exclusion steps above

High health/safety risk
Multiple animals,
damage and droppings

Lethal Control

- ✓ All traps and poisons in locked and secured boxes - inaccessible to pets, wildlife and children
- ✓ Snap traps appropriate for animal, strong enough to kill quickly
- ✓ Order snap traps only from specialty pest control distributors
- ✓ Check snap traps regularly (i.e. every 12 hours) or use electronic trap activation signaling
- ✓ Penetrating captive bolt traps (e.g. Goodnature) can also be used
- ✓ As a last resort, can use certain rodenticides - not ideal because they can poison owls, hawks, and other wildlife that eat rodents

These are legal, regulated methods - but they are **not recommended*** as they can cause animal suffering, are high risk to non-targets, and/or are difficult to administer; legality must also be confirmed according to local bylaws and/or regulations

- Glue traps
- Manually applied blunt trauma that induces immediate unconsciousness
- Cervical dislocation
- Carbon dioxide or carbon monoxide - using pure gas cylinder into sealed chamber with regulator

*email wildlifecontrol@spca.bc.ca for information on these methods

It is **illegal** to use...

- Manually applied blunt trauma that does not induce immediate unconsciousness
- Drowning or suffocation
- Chloroform
- Carbon monoxide by vehicle exhaust
- Decapitation
- Electrocution of conscious animal
- Freezing (including dry ice)