

What can I do to avoid problems with rats and mice?

Like all living things, rats and mice need food, water and shelter to survive. Without these, they will either go elsewhere or die. This simple common sense idea can be the key to long-term control of the pests. By eliminating access to these necessities you can get long-term control and avoid the need to repeatedly apply poisons, which generally provide only short-term results.

Here are a few specific suggestions:

1. Keep rats and mice out of your home, and don't give them hiding places inside your home.

Use physical barriers to stop them. Rats and mice can crawl through very small spaces, so be sure to seal openings well.

- ☞ As appropriate, install and maintain screen windows and doors.
- ☞ Keep a tight fitting door sweep on all exterior doors.
- ☞ Inside, use caulking to fill cracks and crevices in floors and walls, especially in the kitchen.
- ☞ Look under sinks and around radiators for places where pipes pass through walls and floors and make sure spaces around the pipes are sealed.
- ☞ You may use a variety of materials, including screening, steel wool, fiberglass insulation and plaster to close off these passageways.

Within your home, rats and mice will seek sheltered places to hide.

- ☞ Eliminate these by cleaning up clutter that provides hiding places for rodents. Old newspapers and magazines may make a perfect home for rats or mice.

2. Get rid of sources food and water.

A clean house is the key.

- ☞ Keep all food in tightly sealed packages or containers, and keep all surfaces in the kitchen free of food and water.
- ☞ Pay special attention to the hard to reach places in the kitchen, under the refrigerator, stove and sink.
- ☞ Don't forget that pet food or late night snacks left out overnight can be a feast for rodents.
- ☞ Repair all water leaks from faucets, pipes, radiators or any other sources.
- ☞ As you rid your house of pests, be sure to clean up any of their remains; their droppings may serve to attract others if not removed.
- ☞ Check the back of your pantry periodically. Rodents may be feeding on food that is out of your sight.

3. Use traps to remove rats and mice from your home.

Traps are an effective way to catch rodents. Traps will not only catch the rodents, they also can give you clues as to where the pests are coming from and where they are going. Snap traps can be dangerous to children and pets, but generally kill the rodent. Live traps are less likely to harm children and pets, but require that you dispatch any rodents trapped.

- ☞ Be sure to place traps in places that are out of reach of children and pets.
- ☞ Place traps in the evening, when rodents are most active.

- ☞ Live traps such as box traps and glue boards should be checked in the morning and evening.
- ☞ Snap traps should be checked at least once a day as well.
- ☞ Place traps along walls and near potential sources of food and water. A small amount of crunchy peanut butter on the trap acts as a good lure to attract the rodents to the traps.
- ☞ Traps should be placed about 5-10 feet apart along the suspected routes of the rodents.

4. If all else fails, use pesticides *very* carefully.

If you do decide to use a pesticide: ***Read all label warnings before you buy any pesticide. Follow all label directions about use, storage and disposal!***

- ☞ Many commonly used rodent poisons interfere with blood clotting and cause the animal to bleed to death. They can have the same effect on humans and pets.
- ☞ Choose products that have the least chance of coming in contact with your family and pets.
- ☞ Choose products that are enclosed in bait stations or traps. Do not use products that allow children and pets easy access to the poison.
- ☞ Finally, choose a product specifically designed for the pest you are trying to control.

Remember that some important information is not found on the label. The long-term health effects of active ingredients are not included, nor is the identity of so-called "inert" ingredients that may also be toxic chemicals.

Sources of Additional Information

Beyond Pesticides provides “Alternative Fact Sheets” with suggestions for the prevention and control of mice and other pests. <http://www.beyondpesticides.org>, or call (202) 543-5450.

Northwest Coalition for Alternative Pesticides offers “Alternative Factsheets”, which describe control methods for rats and mice. <http://www.pesticide.org/default.htm>, or call (541) 344-5044.

New York State Department of Environmental Conservation offers “IPM In And Around Your House,” which contains information on why pests need to be controlled, and less toxic pest control methods. This free pamphlet can be downloaded at <http://www.dec.state.ny.us/website/dshh/pesticide/brochure.htm>, or call (518) 402-8781

The New York State IPM Program is associated with Cornell Cooperation Extension, and offers “Evict and exile mice from your home,” “Beasts Begone” and “Is there a Mouse in Your House? IPM for House Mice,” which include suggestions on rodent control. <http://www.nysipm.cornell.edu>, or call (800)635-8356.

Common Sense Pest Control by Wm. Olkowski, Sheila Daar, and Helga Olkowski. 1991. Newton: The Tauton Press. This noteworthy reference describes less toxic methods to control a variety of pests, including rats & mice. Check your library for a copy.

New York State Attorney General’s Office provides “Integrated Pest Management - An Introduction” and various reports on pesticides and pest management at <http://www.ag.ny.gov/environment/ipm3fold.html>, or call 212-416-8446 / 518-486-4550.

Dear New Yorker:

For too many New Yorkers, pests like rats and mice are a part of daily life. They are unsightly and unhealthy. They can ruin our food. For many of these same families, the health risks associated with the use of pesticides have also become a part of daily life. It doesn’t have to be this way. Mice, rats and other pests can be eliminated from our homes without resorting to the use of poisons.



The methods we can use to accomplish this are simple and based on common sense - treat rats and mice as pests, not pets! Don’t provide them with food, water and shelter.

In this brochure we suggest actions that you can use in your home. By keeping rats and mice out and ensuring that they don’t get food, water or hiding places, you can protect your family’s health and well-being from both the health risks associated with those pests and the risks of using poisons. There are many other sources of information on pest control methods, which are available to you for free.

My office has been active in a wide range of activities designed to protect the public from the dangers of pesticides. I am happy to provide you with this information on pest control methods that help minimize the use of dangerous chemicals.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Eric Schneiderman". The signature is fluid and cursive.

Eric T. Schneiderman
Attorney General

Got Rats? Got Mice?

How to Control Rats and Mice and Reduce the Use of Poisons



Eric T. Schneiderman
Attorney General

Environmental Protection Bureau
Social Justice Division

August 2007