

## Field Mice

White Footed Mice and Deer Mice are the two most common species of field mice found in the United States. Both species have white feet, usually white undersides, and brownish upper surfaces. Their tails are relatively long, sometimes as long as the head and body. The deer mouse has a distinct separation between the brownish back and white belly. Their tails are also sharply bicolored. It is difficult even for an expert to tell all of the species apart.



Deer Mouse

**Feeding:** Primarily seed eaters they will also feed on nuts, acorns, and other available items. They also consume fruits, insects and insect larvae, fungi, and some green vegetation. They often store quantities of food near their nest sites, particularly in the fall when seeds, nuts, or acorns are abundant.



White-footed Mouse

**Habitat and Behavior:** The deer mouse occupies nearly every type of habitat, from forests to grasslands. The white-footed mouse prefers wooded or brushy areas and is sometimes found in open areas. Both species are mostly nocturnal.

**Reproduction:** Breeding occurs from spring until fall with a summer lull. Litter size varies from 1 to 8 young, but is usually 3 to 5. Females may have from 2 to 4 or more litters per year, depending on species and climate.

During breeding season the females come into heat every fifth day until impregnated. Gestation is usually 21 to 23 days, but may be as long as 37 days in nursing females. Young are weaned at 2 to 3 weeks old and become sexually mature at about 7 to 8 weeks of age. Those born in spring and summer may breed that same year. Mated pairs usually remain together during the breeding season but may take new mates in the spring if both survive the winter. If one mate dies, a new one is acquired.

**Prevention and Control:** Exclusion and habitat modification are the best methods for prevention and control. To keep them from entering your home or building, no openings larger than 1/4 inch should be left unmodified. Mice will gnaw to enlarge openings and gain entry. We will conduct an inspection and take the necessary steps to exclude and prevent further problems.

### Health Considerations:

Deer mice and white-footed mice carry hantaviruses that cause hantavirus pulmonary syndrome (HPS). HPS is a deadly disease humans can contract when they come into contact with infected rodents or their urine and droppings. The virus is mainly transmitted to people when they breathe in air contaminated with the virus.

Rodent control in and around the home remains the primary strategy for preventing hantavirus infection.