

## House Mice

The house mouse is a small, slender rodent that has a slightly pointed nose; small, black, somewhat protruding eyes; large, sparsely haired ears; and a nearly hairless tail with obvious scale rings. They are generally grayish brown with a gray or buff belly. House mice are considered among the most troublesome and economically important rodents in the United States.



**Feeding:** House mice prefer seeds and grain, however, they will try new foods that are available and are considered “nibblers.” Foods high in fat, protein, or sugar may be preferred even when grain and seed are present. Such items include bacon, chocolate candies, butter, and nutmeats.

**Habitat and Behavior:** House mice live in and around homes, farms, commercial buildings. They are also found in open fields and agricultural lands. When the weather gets cold they will move into structures in search of shelter and food. House mice are mainly nocturnal, although some daytime activity may be seen. They will burrow into the ground when other shelter is not readily available. Nesting may occur in the ground or in any sheltered location. You will find nests constructed of shredded fibrous materials such as paper, burlap, filling from cushions, and will look like a “ball” of material loosely woven together. House mice are able to gain entry to structures by gnawing, climbing, jumping, and swimming.

**Reproduction:** House mice may breed year round, but when living outdoors, they breed mostly in spring and fall. A female may have 5 to 10 litters per year. Litters of 5 or 6 young are born 19 to 21 days after mating, although females that conceive while still nursing may have a slightly longer gestation period. Mice are born hairless and with their eyes closed. They grow rapidly, and after 2 weeks they are covered with hair and their eyes and ears are open. They begin to make short excursions from the nest and eat solid food at 3 weeks. Weaning soon follows, and mice are sexually mature at 6 to 10 weeks of age.

**Prevention and Control:** Effective prevention and control of house mouse damage involves three aspects: rodent-proof construction, sanitation, and population reduction. If a house mouse infestation already exists, some form of population reduction is almost always necessary. We will determine the best method for control and prevention based on your specific situation.