



The House Mouse Identification and Biology

By DoMyOwn staff

General

House mice almost always live near humans, in or around houses and in fields. House mice should be controlled because they can transmit diseases, and their droppings can spoil foods. While rats are more harmful to humans than mice, mice cause far significantly greater damage to clothing, furniture, books, and many other household items. Mice may live alone or in groups.

Identification

The House Mouse may be identified by the following physical features:

- House mice are light brown to black with short hair and a light belly
- The House Mouse is about 15 to 19 cm (or 5.5 to 7.5 inches) long with the tail accounting for just over half of its length.
- The adult House Mouse weighs about half an ounce
- The House Mouse has a distinct notch in the cutting surface of upper incisors which is best seen from the side view
- Ears appear large; ears and tail have little hair

Detection

- **Droppings-** The most obvious indicator of house mice will be the presence of droppings, which are about 1/8-1/4 inch long and rod shaped
- **Tracks-** House mice will leave a hind foot track of up to 3/4". The tracks of rats will be much larger.
- **Gnawing holes-** House mice gnaw small, clean holes about 1-1/2 inches in diameter. You may find gnawing damage from House mice on cardboard boxes and paper which they have shredded for nesting material. House mice will also gnaw at bar soaps.

Habits & Food Sources

The House Mouse lives most often in close proximity with humans, including in and around homes, barns, granaries, and fields, or any place where food is readily available. The House Mouse makes its nest from soft materials like rags and shredded paper or cardboard. Damage to any of these materials in your home is probably a sign that mice are present. Nests within your home may be found in walls, ceiling voids, storage boxes, drawers, under major appliances, or within the upholstery of furniture.

In the wild, House mice feed primarily on plant material but will also accept dairy and meat products. In human habitation, House mice will eat any available human foods as well as glue, soap, and paper.

Behavior & Biology

The House Mouse is nocturnal and will most often be found searching for food and otherwise at highest activity after dusk. An interesting fact is that a mouse will not usually forage for food very far from its nest-typically within 10 to 25 feet. For this reason, traps or bait should be placed in areas where mouse activity is most apparent, and adjacent to walls and edges where mice prefer to travel.

House Mice can produce up to 13 litters a year, with an average of 6 young per litter. Young mice develop rapidly and sexual maturity is reached at approximately 7 weeks. Breeding occurs most frequently from early June to late fall.

House Mouse Control Products:

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