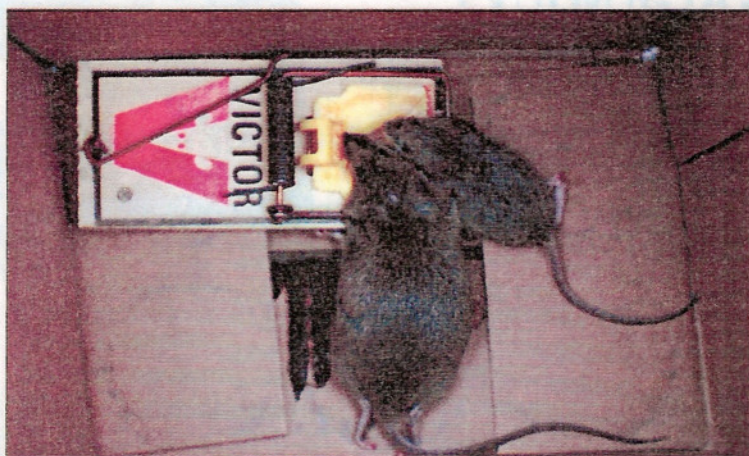


PEST SPOTLIGHT

Effective Solutions To Solving
Common Pest Problems

No More Rodents!

Editor's Note: "No More Rodents! Practical Tips For Improving Rodent Control" is the first of a two-part series outlining, in detail, practical and effective rodent control strategies for technicians. In the first installment, we'll look at the steps technicians need to take before they start treatment. Technicians will read how important a proper inspection is and what safety equipment they should use. In the second article, we'll take a closer look at the various management techniques available to technicians to control rodents.



Successful rodent control involves using an attractive bait and proper trap placement within the account.

Traditionally, the fall season has brought with it an increase in rodent activity and another opportunity for technicians to service their customers' needs. Controlling rodents, particularly Norway rats, can be both interesting and challenging. Each job can be a little bit different and some can be very difficult. Rodents can go to extreme measures to avoid, foil or otherwise circumvent a technician's management efforts, and technicians need to be prepared to deal with the tough infestations, as well as the easy ones.

KNOW YOUR ENEMY. As in all pest control work, it is extremely important for technicians to learn as much as possible about their target pest. This

includes brushing up on biology, behavior and other important information available through a variety of sources. The better you know your

target pest, the better equipped you'll be to deal with it.

There are several sources of printed information available including *The*

Mallis Handbook of Pest Control, *Truman's Scientific Guide to Pest Control Operations* and the National Pest Control Association's *Field Guide To Structural Pests*. Monthly industry publications, like *Service Technician* and *Pest Control Technology*, also provide timely topical reference articles. These references and others are important learning aids that should be included in your company's or your personal training library.

INSPECTION. How many times have we heard these words — conduct a thorough inspection. Most pest control "how to" materials stress the importance of a thorough inspection and this article is no different. A thorough inspection is critical to any pest control work and is equally important in rodent control. The inspection allows you to determine various factors including approximate extent of the infestation, rodent entry points, damage, likely paths of travel, food sources, water sources and harborage sites.

If you've performed pest inspections in the past, you probably know what the recommended tools required for carrying out an adequate inspection are. The list includes: flashlight, ladder, screw driver and various other hand tools to gain access as necessary. Less obvious tools include: a bump

Practical Tips For Improving Rodent Control: Part 1

By Paul Bello

Looking For Signs Of Rodent Infestation: The House Mouse

Gnaw Marks. New gnawing marks or holes tend to be rough, whereas old gnawings are smooth from wear.

Droppings. Fresh droppings are soft and moist, whereas old droppings are dried and hard. House mouse droppings are about 1/8 to 1/4 inch long, rod shaped, and with pointed ends.

Tracks/Footprints. Front foot is four-toed and print is in front of hind print with five-toes. Fresh tracks are clear and sharp, whereas old tracks are at least partially obscured by dust.

Rub Marks. Are usually less noticeable and smaller in size than those of rats.

Burrows. Indoors they often nest in various materials such as insulation. If active, they are free of dust and cobwebs. Entrance usually consists of packed/compressed material with rub marks sometimes visible.

Runways. Rodents frequently use the same paths, usually along walls, stacked merchandise and interior objects. Active runways are free of dust and cobwebs, with fresh droppings. Tracks may or may not be visible.

Damaged Goods. House mice prefer seeds or cereals.



Information adapted from the *NPCA Field Guide To Structural Pests*.

In rodent control, as in all pest control work, it is extremely important for technicians to learn as much as possible about the target pests they've been hired to control.

cap, knee pads, respirator, gloves and coveralls, clip board and inspection form.

PAPERWORK. There seems to be a never ending deluge of paperwork required in this industry and here we are recommending additional paperwork. However, this paperwork serves as a practical tool to enhance your rodent control procedures and not simply to add to your paper trail.

One of the most important tools when conducting your inspection is a paper and pencil. It is hard to remember what you saw in an account without writing it down. Significant findings and observations are best committed to paper for future reference than simply remembered. In a normal day, when several accounts are visited, you may find it difficult to remember what was seen and at which specific account it was.

To aid your inspection and reduce the amount of writing necessary in the field, technicians should create an inspection form or work sheet. Any personal computer with word processing software can be utilized to create your own inspection work sheet. The newly created work sheet may be easily modified and improved via the computer.

The work sheet may be formatted to guide you through your inspections, making sure nothing is omitted. It may be argued no two accounts are alike, but there are basic similarities. These similarities may be utilized on your forms. The forms can then be created including the similar or common items one can expect to find in any account infested by rodents. This will allow you to simply check off items rather than having to write items long hand, thus saving time and increasing clarity for future reference. Of course, no form can be all inclusive and there will need to be a section where you can write down miscellaneous information.

CONSTRUCTION. Most rodent control calls are a result of rodents successfully invading a structure. Your understanding of how rodents gain access to a building is enhanced by your understanding of how the building was constructed. Make mental notes of the construction and how the rodents may need to travel once inside.

How a rat, which entered at the sill

Service Technician

Looking For Signs Of Rodent Infestation: Norway Rats

Gnaw Marks. New gnawings or holes tend to be rough, whereas old gnawings are smooth from wear and old holes are often greasy.

Droppings. Fresh droppings are soft and moist, whereas old droppings are dried and hard; adult Norway droppings are about 3/4 inch with blunt ends.

Tracks/Footprints. Front foot is four-toed and print is in front of usually longer hind print with five toes. Fresh tracks are clear and sharp, whereas old tracks are at least partially obscured by dust.

Rub Marks. Can be dark, greasy markings on vertical walls. Fresh marks are soft, greasy and easily smeared, whereas old marks appear to have dried grease and are flaky.

Burrows. Found in earthen banks, under concrete slabs and under walls. If active, they are free of dust and cobwebs. Main opening usually has hard packed soil and rub marks may be visible.

Runways. Consistently follow same paths, usually along walls, stacked merchandise, etc. Active runways have greasy appearance, are free of dust and cobwebs, with fresh tracks and droppings.

Damaged Goods. Norway rats prefer meat, fish and cereal with dry dog food being a favorite.

Information adapted from the *NPCA Field Guide To Structural Pests*.

plate, worked its way up to the soffit or drop ceiling will be easier to understand when you know how the structure was built. There are several "how to" construction and home improvement reference books available from your local library. These reference guides will provide you with a basic understanding of construction practices. Visiting a site where construction is in progress is also an excellent way to learn about construction firsthand. This knowledge, combined with your rodent control experience, will serve as a valuable tool in your rodent control arsenal.

COMMUNICATION SKILLS. Another important part of your inspection is the interview with the client. A successful interview requires communication skills. Communication skills not only involve a person's ability to speak, but also the ability to listen.

Ask the customer questions and listen carefully to what is being said. The customer is at the account more often than you and has made, perhaps unknowingly, observations that are important to carrying out an effective control program. Take the time to ask

the customer questions and write down (or check off) any significant information. The customer's observations may shorten your search for burrows, entrance holes and other signs of rodent infestation.

The client may be somewhat apprehensive due to the presence of rodents, especially in a residential account. This is a technician's opportunity to assure the customer you share their concern and that they can rely on your professional expertise to remedy their problem in a timely fashion. Customers who have seen a rat eating donuts on their kitchen counter top, or worse, are more apt to be nervous and even panicky about a rodent infestation. Your confident assurance and professionalism may be more important to the client than you think.

SAFETY EQUIPMENT. The use of safety equipment in rodent control is often overlooked by technicians and this can be a very costly mistake. For example, a bump cap will allow you to get into areas where there are objects which might cut or otherwise hurt your head. Some technicians wear a construction type hard hat that is heavier, but pro-

vides more protection than a bump cap. Bump or cut your head seriously once and you'll be a believer.

The same case can be made for using knee pads. They'll protect your knees and allow you to crawl more comfortably over rough surfaces. Gloves allow you to touch things most people won't. The proper gloves can protect you from electrical shock, as well as other potential hazards. Well constructed coveralls protect your street clothes and help keep the critters out, especially if you tuck the legs inside your socks or boots.

At the time of this writing hantavirus claimed another victim in Long Island, N.Y. This underscores the importance of using a respirator and adequate safety equipment in areas where rodent activity is suspected. All technicians should be well versed in precautionary measures regarding hantavirus. Refer to recommendations published by the National Pest Control Association and local health departments regarding hantavirus precautions and precautionary procedures. All technicians need to be aware of the current safety procedures for hantavirus protection. Be sure you understand the safety precautions and have adequate safety equipment available before you perform a rodent management program.

SUMMARY. Rodent control may be as simple as a few mice in a residential account to numerous rats in a commercial account. However, each client views their specific problem as paramount to all others. There have been cases of rats biting children and adults in their residences, and warehouses full of foodstuffs contaminated by mice. Such cases illustrate the public's need to enlist the services of a professional pest control service and underscore the role a technician plays in protecting man, his property and the environment from pests.

Remember, rodents are capable of facilitating the spread of many harmful pathogens to man. Technicians provide a valuable service to their customers and the entire community when performing rodent control and are truly guardians of public health. **ST**

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