

# City of New Orleans Mosquito & Termite Control Board

## Pest Proofing: Best Rodent Control for Your Home – Guidelines for Property Owners and Tenants



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CITY OF NEW ORLEANS

### Why Pest Proof ?

Humans provide food, water, warmth, and harborage for rodents. While seeking these life necessities, they can cause damage to homes and businesses, transmit disease, and cause emotional distress. Limiting their access to these resources is the best way to control rodents. Pest proofing is the first step in rodent control and is the safest and most effective method of keeping rodents out of your home.

### Common Rodents Found in or Near Structures

**House mice** (*Mus musculus*) are most commonly found indoors in urban environments. They can become serious pests even in small numbers. Mice are the number one indoor rodent pest and generally are the size of a small red potato.

**Roof rats** (*Rattus rattus*) will often nest inside attics and forage outdoors. However, they will forage inside a structure if there is available food and water. They have large ears and their tails are longer than their head and body combined.

**Norway rats** (*Rattus norvegicus*) typically burrow outside, but take advantage of available resources found near homes. These rats are large and robust weighing approximately 1 pound or more. They have short tails and blunt noses.



house mouse

### Pest Proofing Inside Structures

- Sanitation is the first step in rodent control
- Rats can enter through a ½ inch opening and a house mouse through a ¼ inch opening. Seal large and small openings by first stuffing the hole with steel or copper wool. Then install sheet metal or use a concrete patch to tightly seal the hole. Steel and copper wool used alone is a temporary fix and does not provide long term control.
- Utility pipes and hoses should also be properly sealed with a “clam shell” or escutcheon plates, and are commonly found at hardware stores.
- All doors should be sealed with tight fitting door sweeps. The brush variety is the most effective. Weather stripping, foam, or rubber sweeps are not effective wear out quickly.
- Doors and windows should be kept closed at all times.
- Trash should be taken out daily, and floors around these cans should be swept and moped every day.
- Kitchen counters and food preparation areas should be kept clean at all times. Even small crumbs and grease drippings are enough to sustain house mice.
- Store dry food items (including pet food) in heavy plastic or metal containers with tight fitting lids.
- Water should not sit overnight in sinks or pet dishes. Toilet bowl lids should be kept closed and broken or leaky faucets should be repaired promptly.
- Remove boxes, paper, clothes, etc. because when left undisturbed they are utilized by rodents either for feeding or nesting.
- Gnaw marks, droppings, urine smell, grease marks, and food hoarding are all signs of a rodent infestation. Check regularly and clean up any droppings, urine, or food found. Use disposable gloves when inspecting. Clean up rodent damage with a bleach-water solution by spraying the damage directly.

## Pest Proofing Outside the Home

- Sanitation is the first step in rodent control.
- Seal large and small opening leading into your home by first stuffing holes with steel or copper wool and then patching the hole with sheet metal or a concrete patch.
- Garbage needs to be put in plastic garbage bags and placed in sturdy garbage cans with lids. They should not be stored near doors, windows or garage doors.
- Store pet food and wildlife feed in rodent proof containers with tight fitting lids. Never leave pet food and seeds out overnight. Pet living areas should be kept clean and free from debris. Refrain from feeding wildlife.
- Make sure your home has roof drainage by removing blockages from your gutters and downspouts. Fix leaky pipes and faucets promptly.
- Keep vegetation trimmed at least 12 inches from the ground and 18 inches from the building. Choose non-fruiting tree varieties when possible. Ripened fruits, nuts, and vegetables should be harvested promptly.
- Seal cracks around windows and doors with a silicone sealant. Latex caulks tend to crack and give way over time and are less effective.
- Hardware cloth (1/4 inch) should be installed over crawl spaces, vents, and any other openings.

## What to Look for during an inspection

- Droppings
- Burrows in the ground or holes in the walls
- Foot prints in dust
- Gnaw marks in wood, pipes, and wires
- Rodent odors from urine and feces; smells musky
- Runways: matted down vegetation or a clear line of travel, often with droppings along the way
- Grease marks: oil and dirt left behind on well traveled surfaces often appear dark brown or black
- Live or dead rodent sightings
- Sounds such as high pitched squeaks, gnawing, scratching, foraging, digging, and fighting

**Sanitation is the first step  
to rodent control!**  
Every effort should be made to  
eliminate available food and shelter in  
and around your property.

Once your home is rodent proofed, then locating the infestation becomes a manageable task. Sanitation is the first step in rodent control. Regularly inspect behind refrigerators, stoves, cluttered areas, food sources, etc to locate hot spots. Snap traps work great indoors. **Should an over-the-counter rodenticide treatment become necessary, please follow all label instructions and never leave them out where children or non-target animals can access the bait.** Rodenticides should be used as part of an integrated pest management approach for rodent control.

For more information or to report a  
rodent issue please contact:  
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