

# PestGazette

WINTER 2017

*Brought to you by Thomas Pest Control*



## Storing Firewood

Now that we are in the throes of winter, the allure of a roaring fireplace is hard to ignore. But the wood you bring in for your cozy fire can also bring unwanted hitchhikers.

A variety of insects, arachnids, and other arthropods like to live in, on, and around stacked firewood. Some harmless (though undesired) insects include pillbugs, sowbugs, daddy-longlegs, spiders, earwigs, and springtails. The most problematic invaders are the carpenter ants and wood-boring beetles because these can damage your home.

There are several ways you can help reduce the likelihood of importing pest problems. If you have your own firewood supply outdoors, it's best to stack it away from your house to discourage any of these creatures from wandering the short distance indoors for heat and shelter. Before bringing in fire-

wood, make sure there are not bird or other animal nests on or near it. These nests can harbor mites, ticks, and fleas. Keeping your firewood tightly wrapped and covered can help reduce the number of critters inside it. Before you bring wood indoors, brush off any soil or debris first and use firewood very soon after you bring it indoors. The shorter the amount of time it is sitting inside, the less likely any pests will start moving off of it and into the recesses of your home.

It's also important to remember that it is never advisable to transport firewood great distances or move it across state lines. The spread of invasive insects is rapidly expanding and is greatly aided by the movement of firewood. By taking these steps, you will be much less likely to introduce a pest problem into your home this winter.

## Rodents 101

A common misconception is that pest problems tend to go away when temperatures start to drop. In reality, cooler temperatures drive pests such as rats and mice indoors seeking food and shelter to survive the winter. Once inside, these seasonal invaders have everything they need to start breeding inside your home.

Rodents are dangerous pests capable of spreading dozens of diseases. When foraging, rats and mice contaminate surfaces with their droppings and urine that can spread bacteria, contaminate foods, and cause allergic reactions. Rodent bites are also a serious concern, with around 50,000 people bitten by rodents each year. These bites are most common among infants and the elderly, and can spread

disease or lead to secondary infection.

Overwintering rodents can also cause extensive damage to your home. Gnawing damage to electrical wires can pose a dangerous fire hazard, while chewed water lines can cause leaks or even flooding. Rats and mice also cause considerable damage to insulation through tunneling, by tearing it apart for nesting materials or due to contamination from feces.

When rats and mice frequent an area, they often leave behind clues such as droppings, urine, and gnawing damage. Other, more subtle signs can include tracks or runways, rub marks, burrows, and even sounds. These clues can be used to identify *continued on page 2*



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# Rodents *(continued from page 1)*



where rodents are feeding or nesting. Addressing these conditions at the first signs of rodent activity is important to the success of any rodent management program. Contact us at the first signs of rodent activity so that we can resolve your rodent problems quickly and safely.

Preventing rats and mice from entering your home is also critical to avoiding an infestation. However, rodent-proofing your home is no easy task. Mice can squeeze through openings as small as a dime, while rats can fit a hole about the size of a quarter. Trying to locate every possible entry point can be time consuming and challenging.

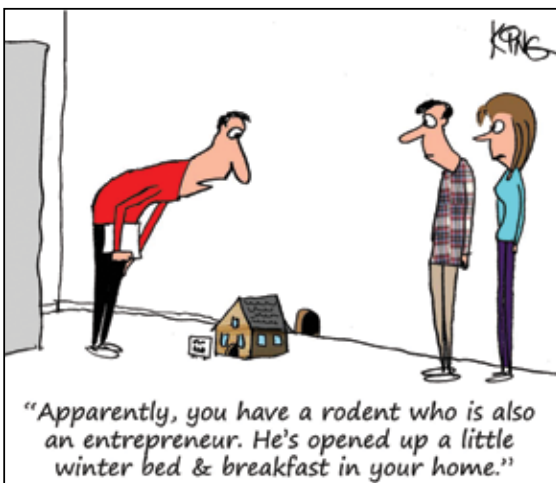
We are equipped with the latest in rodent-resistant materials to correct any entry point that rats and mice may use to invade your home. Call us for a professional inspection today.

## Rats

Rats will use nearly any means possible to gain access to food, water and harborage. They are good climbers with excellent balance and can use wires, pipes, and even gutters to find entry points into homes. Rats are also very capable swimmers making them right at home along waterways and in sewers. There have even been reports of rats entering homes through toilets. They are most active at night, but can be seen foraging during the day.

The two rats that most commonly infest homes are the Norway rat and the roof rat. Both species can measure nearly a foot from nose to tail as adults. However, the Norway rat is the heavier and larger bodied of the two rodents, averaging nearly one pound fully grown. Norway rats have a blunt snout, small ears, and their tail is about as long as the combined length of their body and head. Their fur is typically reddish-brown, but can vary in color from mostly grey to dark brown.

Norway rats spend much of their time on the ground where they have easy access to garbage or other readily available food sources. They are also



Even if access points are located, permanently sealing them to prevent future pest entry can be no easy task. Rats and mice are capable of chewing through many common construction materials including wood, rubber and even concrete! Selecting the wrong material to close an opening can be just as ineffective as failing to seal it in the first place.



Norway rat



Roof rat



House mouse

known to dig underground burrows that can cause damage to landscape and even undermine the foundation of homes. Indoors, Norway rats will nest in wall voids, attics or other similar spaces found throughout a home.

Roof rats are smaller bodied than Norway rats, averaging closer to one-half pound when fully grown. Their snout and ears are comparatively larger than the Norway rat, and their tail is longer than the combined length of their body and head. Fur color can also vary, but is often dark grey or tan with a lighter belly. Having a slimmer frame, roof rats are better adapted than Norway rats to climbing and living off of the ground. They are often seen traveling along power lines or fence tops, and prefer to nest above ground in dense foliage or attics. Roof rats are also generalist feeders, but prefer fruits and vegetables more than Norway rats.

Controlling both Norway and roof rats requires a combination of advanced management strategies tailored to the biology of each pest. First, harborage sites and possible food sources must be eliminated. After completing a detailed inspection of your home, we will identify those likely places on your property where rats are living and feeding and determine how to correct those issues. Once those sites have been addressed, a combination of rat-specific trapping and baiting techniques can be used to quickly and safely eliminate the infestation.

## Mice

Mice are well adapted to thriving under a range of conditions. They are typically found in open fields, but can just as easily nest indoors in cluttered closets, behind walls or other compact spaces. Their small size makes eliminating all access points a challenge, often requiring a professional to inspect and seal the home up properly. They are also nocturnal, but will readily forage during the day.

The house mouse is far smaller than the Norway or roof rat. Adults weigh less than an ounce, and measure between five and seven inches fully grown. House mice have large ears and small black eyes, with fur that ranges from light brown to grey. Nests are commonly found in sheltered locations, and usually consist of shredded materials such as paper, cardboard and insulation.

Much like with controlling rats, controlling house mice also requires a combination of management strategies that are tailored to the behavior of the rodent. Our management methods are uniquely developed based upon the conditions of your home to provide the safest and most effective rodent control methods available. Contact us today to find out more about how we can keep your home rodent free this winter. ■



## The Emperor Has No Clothes

Check the racks of your local thrift store and you're bound to find heaps of wool coats and sweaters riddled with moth holes. Who *hasn't* found little holes in their favorite cashmere cardigan or wool sportcoat? It's common this time of year to unpack your cold weather clothes and find damage done by clothes moth larvae.

There are two kinds of clothes moths encountered in homes. Clothes moths, more specifically known as either the webbing clothes moth or the casemaking clothes moth, are occasional fabric pests. Their larvae will feed on any animal fibers containing proteins, including fur, wool and wool blends, silk, hair, feathers/down, mohair, cashmere, and more. You could find damage (or the larvae themselves) on woolen clothing, carpets, rugs, upholstered furniture, furs, stored wool, animal bristles in hair brushes, and even woolen felts on piano keys. Synthetics or fabrics such as cotton may also be fed upon if they are blended with wool. Larvae may use cotton fibers to make their pupal cases. Damage generally occurs in hidden areas such as under collars or cuffs of clothing, in crevices of upholstered furniture, and in areas of carpeting covered by furniture. Fabrics stained by foods, drinks or perspiration, are usually more subject to damage.

Clothes moths are weak flyers and are not attracted to lights. They tend to hide when disturbed, and for this reason, infestations of clothes moths are not usually noticed until damaged fabrics, furs, or feathers are found. Close examination of the objects reveals the presence of silken webs that are spun by the larvae as they begin to pupate and also chew holes from larval feeding. Because adult moths are weak flyers and not attracted to lights, they are usually found very close to the infested items, such as in dark

areas of closets. Adults are golden colored with reddish golden hairs on top of the head. Wings, with a span of about 1/2 inch, are fringed with a row of golden hairs and larvae are small and cream colored.

Heated buildings enable clothes moths to continue development even during the winter months. Generally, developmental time for the clothes moth from egg to egg is between four to six months, and there are generally two generations a year.

Call us for advice on how best to tackle clothes moth issues. You can do a lot to prevent clothes moth damage by dry cleaning and then storing your valuable winter woolens and similar type of materials in **airtight** containers over the summer months. To reduce the possibility of infestations, periodically clean areas of a home that may harbor clothes moths. These areas include many seldom-cleaned spots, such as under heavy pieces of furniture, along baseboards, in cracks where hair and debris accumulate, closets, heaters and vents. The vacuum cleaner is the best tool for most of this cleaning. After using the vacuum in infested areas, freeze the bag, then dispose of it promptly. Bags can pick up eggs, larvae, or adult moths.

Clothes moths may first become established on woolen garments or scraps stored for long periods. If such articles are to be saved, they should be stored properly, or periodically hung in the sun and brushed thoroughly, especially along seams and in folds and pockets. Brushing destroys eggs and exposes larvae. Larvae are strongly repelled by light, and will fall from clothing when they cannot find protection. If these proactive measures do not work, then call us, and we can provide a trapping and mating disruption strategy as well as other materials known to be effective on clothes moths. ■



### CONTACT US TODAY!

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