

Do You Have A Mouse In The House?

AGRI-VIEWS

by Chuck Otte, Geary County Extension Agent

Last Saturday morning I was out birdwatching and my cell phone rang. It was my sister. She had a mouse in her apartment. My sister does not like mice. She really doesn't like mice. I heard my sister using language I've never heard before in all my life! So like a good little brother, I calmed her down and walked her through all the options for dealing with the mouse in her abode and how to keep others from joining the party.

This has been a bad year for vermin. I have received many phone calls from homeowners dealing with mice and pack rat problems. Pack rats are a special challenge that I won't address today, but rather focus on dealing with a mouse in the house.

The first step in dealing with these little rodents is to keep them out of the house to begin with. While there are several different species of mice that you may encounter they all have one thing in common. They can get through a surprisingly small hole. They only need an opening slightly larger than 1/4 of an inch. For most of us, that's smaller than your little finger! They can run along wire cables or ropes and have the ability to jump up twelve inches to a flat surface.

You need to seal up any cracks or openings around your house. If you can stick your little finger in an opening, a mouse can get in it. Steel wool makes a good temporary plug. Expandable foam that comes in an aerosol can, can be used for a short period of time but mice have very sharp teeth. They can chew through that, as well as latex, plastic, rubber, and wood.

All of this is good, for the future, but how do we deal with that little rascal that is already in the house though? A good indoors cat may take care of the problem, but don't bet on it. I've caught mice by hand before, but I wouldn't recommend that either (I was young and foolish!) You can also forget the so called sonic or ultrasonic devices. There is absolutely no scientific proof that they work. Save your money!

Which basically leaves trapping and poisons. Poisons are a rather passive approach but can be effective, especially in out buildings, garages or places that pets and other wildlife can't get to the bait. Forget about the old tale that there are poisons that will kill the mouse and keep it from stinking. It just doesn't exist. When a creature dies, something has to happen to the moisture in the carcass. That usually involves some kind of decomposition unless it is outside in winter it freeze dries. If a mouse is poisoned and dies in your house, you will know it!

I like trapping. It's probably a guy thing. There's a great deal of satisfaction in seeing the corpse of that little rascal that has been tormenting me and my family. You can use glue boards, but then you have a live rodent dragging, or trying to drag, your glue board around the house, not a fun situation! There are many different trap types and most of them will work. I'm old school so give me a good old snap trap.

You want to set a trap against the wall, at a 90 degree angle, with the trigger facing the wall. Mice run along baseboard areas for protection so put the trap where they are. You can even put two side by side to improve your success. An alternative method is to place them perpendicular to the wall with the triggers facing away from each other. Then I like to bait them with peanut butter, the cheaper the better. If you don't want to touch the dead mouse, just throw the whole trap away, they're cheap enough.

My sister hasn't told me if she's had success yet, but I haven't had any more phone calls from her either. So be patient, be persistent and you will be successful, at least for this round!