Rats and mice are rodents that are commonly found living near people. They can be very destructive to homes, and can carry germs that make people sick. They often make their nests in and around people’s homes and office buildings.

The most common rodents encountered by residents in Fairfax County are the Norway rat and the house mouse. Both of these rodents are very good at jumping, climbing, swimming, gnawing and squeezing through very small spaces.

Rats and mice can make their nests in and around people’s homes and office buildings. Rodents are not picky about economic level or social status. If your home or building can provide shelter and a food source, you are inviting rats and mice to move in!

How Do Rodents Get In?
Rats and mice can crawl through very small spaces (under doors, into crevices, etc.) and when they can’t fit, they simply gnaw and chew their way through.

Is Your Home Open to RATS and MICE?
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For more information or to arrange a rodent inspection of a home and yard, contact:

FAIRFAX COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENT
Division of Environmental Health
Community Health and Safety Section
10777 Main Street • Fairfax, VA 22030
703-246-2300 • TTY 703-591-6435
www.fairfaxcounty.gov/health

This document can be made available in an alternative format upon request. Please call 703-246-2300, TTY 703-591-6435. Allow seven working days for preparation of the material.

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To control rodents, you MUST remove their food, shelter and entry points to your home or other buildings.

**Clean Up — Eliminate Food Sources**

Remove all rodent food. Trash and garbage should be contained in a rodent-proof container, such as a trash can with a tight-locking lid. Trash cans and dumpsters should be cleaned regularly and their doors and/or lids should close tightly. Prevent bird seed from falling to the ground. Piles of wood, furniture and other yard debris should be removed. Grass should be cut low to the ground. Plants, bushes and branches should be trimmed away from the home or building. Pet waste should always be picked up and disposed properly.

**Rodent Proof Your Home and Buildings**

Holes larger than a dime, and cracks larger than the diameter of a pencil, should be sealed to prevent rodents from entering your home or other buildings. The gaps around pipe and wire chases should also be sealed. All doors, including the garage door, should have weather stripping. Tight fitting crawl space doors and vent covers should be in good repair. Check periodically around your home and other buildings to correct problem areas.

Sealants that are strong and durable should be used.

- ✔ steel wool
- ✔ putty
- ✔ copper stuffing
- ✔ expandable foam
- ✔ cement

**Rodent Burrows**

Rodents use burrows to move from place to place. Burrows are typically found around concrete slabs and building foundations, under materials stored outdoors, and along fence rows. An active burrow entrance is usually seen as a hole in the ground, clear of leaves and debris. Active burrow runways are often clean and smooth, and frequently follow along a wall or fence.

To find out if the burrow is active, loosely fill the opening of the hole with dirt. If a rodent is using that burrow, the hole will reappear. Rodents cannot be eliminated by blocking their burrows. They can simply dig another burrow.

**Garbage is an all-you-can-eat buffet for rodents**

**What Rodents Eat**

- trash and garbage in plastic bags
- spilled or discarded food
- kitchen scraps
- pet food
- pet feces
- flower bulbs and seeds
- bird seed spilled on the ground
- food from low-hanging feeders

**Eliminate Rodents by Trapping or Baiting**

**Trapping (recommended for indoors)**

Trapping is the recommended method for rodent control inside a structure. Many varieties of traps are available. Snap traps and glue boards are best used when just a few rodents are present. Catch traps for multiple rodents are best for larger numbers of rodents. All traps are more effective when peanut butter or bacon is used to lure the rodent to the trap. Keep the trap in one place to give rodents a chance to get used to it being there. Always follow manufacturer instructions.

**Baiting with Pesticide**

This method of rodent control uses a food source mixed with poison. There are many types of baits. Some require repeated doses over several days before the rodent dies. Other baits kill the rodent after a single dose. Baits must be contained in tamper-proof containers, to help protect children, pets and unintended wildlife. Baits should be placed in areas where rodents are already feeding. Rats tend to avoid new objects and foods. Mice are not suspicious of new objects, but tend to nibble and may not eat enough to get a lethal dose. Check the bait daily and replace it as needed. Always follow manufacturer instructions when using toxic baits or any pesticide.

**Hire a Professional**

You may choose to hire a licensed pest management professional, who can provide expertise in effectively and safely placing pesticides. This is recommended for eliminating large numbers of rodents (infestations).