

Humane Mouse Control



Situation: You've seen mice or signs of their presence—such as droppings or chewed food containers—in your home.

Why This Happens:

House Mice (*Mus musculus*) are commensal animals. “Commensal” literally means “at the same table.” This means they rely heavily on humans, human-made structures, and human food supplies for survival. House mice are not native to North America; they came to this continent as stowaways on immigrant ships coming here from Europe.

House Mice aren't the only mouse species that get into people's homes. In Wisconsin, native Deer Mice (*Peromyscus maniculatus*) and White-Footed Mice (*Peromyscus leucopus*) may also enter structures, though they tend to keep to less-developed areas adjacent to woods and fields rather than in big cities. These native species are usually a bit larger than House Mice, and they generally appear more brownish and have larger, bulging eyes.

FAQs & Humane Solutions:

“I've seen mice in my house. They are getting into my cupboards and eating my food and their poop is all over the place. What can I do?”

There are three components to a humane and successful household mouse control program: *Exclude*, *Secure*, and *Evict*.

1. **Exclude:** For long-term success, you need to exclude mice from getting into your house. Go outside and walk around your house, looking for holes or cracks in the outside walls, especially in the foundation. Pay special attention to where pipes or wires—such as those for central air-conditioning or sump pumps—pass through the walls. Go into the basement in the daytime and turn the basement lights off. Look near the



◀ House Mouse

Deer Mouse
nibbling at
food left on the
counter ▶



◀ A possible
mouse entry: A
hole where a
pipe enters the
basement from
outside

The same hole,
plugged with steel
wool ▶



top of the basement wall for any light coming in. Plug any holes or cracks wider than 1/4" with steel wool or steel wool and caulk to exclude mice. Or, you can install sheet metal flashing or hardware cloth over the crack or hole.

- 2. Secure:** Secure all food in metal or glass containers with tight-fitting lids. This includes pet food, human foodstuffs, bird seed, and grass seed. Clean up any spilled food right away. Remember, mice are small, so leaving one kibble of spilled dog food for a mouse to find would be like leaving a basketball-sized chunk of food for a human.
- 3. Evict:** With mouse entries and exits now closed and potential mouse food supplies contained in mouse-proof containers, your final step is to evict the mice that you still have in your house. For this, we recommend the Victor Tin Cat humane mouse live-trap, [available here](#). Bear in mind that given their commensal nature, any mice you evict will likely enter another non-mouse-secured structure in order to survive.

Live-Trapping Technique:

For best results, place the live traps against walls (mice like to travel along walls for safety and security) close to where you have seen mice or evidence of their presence. Bait the live traps with peanut butter and/or seeds, shelled nuts, bread, bits of chocolate, or dry dog or cat food. Mice can be fickle; most will readily go for peanut butter, but others can be fussier about their food choices. Also place a small jar lid full of fresh drinking water for the mouse/mice in the live trap. Once they are set, it is important that you to check these traps often, *at least every 8 hours*, and liberate any trapped mice outdoors as soon as possible.

Keep trapping until you no longer catch mice. If you suspect that you still have mice in the house but they are ignoring the traps, try changing the type of bait you are using, or stop trapping for a few days and then start up again. It can also help to change the locations of your traps every few days.

Place a shallow dish of water (the lid of a jar would work) along with food bait inside the trap. ►



◀ Place the trap against a wall where you have seen evidence of mice.

Victor Tin Cat humane mouse live-trap properly set up ►



See the next page for information about releasing mice outdoors.

“Where should I release the mice I catch?”

Because House Mice are commensal animals, we recommend releasing your uninvited guests near your home since they are familiar with the resources around your dwelling. But make no mistake, when you remove the mice from your home and release them, they will not suddenly become “field mice” and live from then-on in the woods and fields—they will sooner or later enter another human-made structure near the release site. But, if you have done a good job of exclusion, they won’t be able to get back into *your* house.

For humane reasons, please do not evict mice during severe weather, such as storms or periods of deep snow or bitter cold. If you have any questions, you may call the WHS Wildlife Rehabilitation Center at (414) 431-6204.

Note: Please **DO NOT** use glue traps or ‘sticky’ traps! **These traps are very inhumane.** They leave an animal to die of dehydration, starvation or exhaustion as it struggles for hours or even days to escape the glue. Some animals will break their legs or even chew off limbs in an effort to escape. 🐾



◀ Store food in metal or glass containers with tight-fitting lids to dissuade mice from hanging around your home.

Mice like to travel along walls or baseboards for an added sense of security. ▶



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The Wisconsin Humane Society is a charitable organization that depends entirely on donations to fulfill its mission to create a community that values animals and treats them with respect and kindness. Your support for the WHS Wildlife Rehabilitation Center makes possible the distribution of information like this to thousands of people who request it each year, and makes possible the humane care of over 5,000 injured, sick, and orphaned wild animals from our community each year. You may donate online at www.wihumane.org/donate or by mailing a check to the following address:

WHS Wildlife Center, 4500 W. Wisconsin Avenue, Milwaukee, WI 53208.