

Pantry Pest Prevention

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Here are some helpful tips to reduce your chances of having a pantry pest infestation.

Commonly Infested Products:

- Stored foods: flour, cereals, cracked grains, baking mixes, processed food mixes, crackers, macaroni, cured meats, powdered milk, dried fruits, nuts, popcorn and spices.
- Other: pet foods, birdseed, ornamental corn and dried flower arrangements.

Tips to Prevent Pantry Pests:

- Buy foods in package sizes that can be used up in a short time — within two to four months. Use older and/or opened packages before new ones.
- Store your food in insect-proof containers (screw-top glass, heavy plastic or metal).
- Store susceptible foods in the refrigerator or freezer.
- Keep food areas and areas where pet foods and birdseed are stored clean. Exposed food — even tiny crumbs — will attract insects.

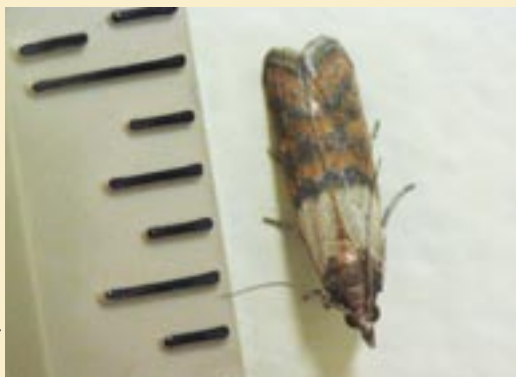


Photo by UNL Extension Assistant Vicki Jeddica

The Indian meal moth (above) is the most common food-infesting moth. Adult moths are nearly 1/2-inch long and have distinctive wing markings.



Adult confused flour beetles (above) are 3/16-inch long.



Warehouse beetles (adult and larvae shown at left) are a type of Dermestid beetle.

Photo by UNL Dept. of Entomology

UNL Dept. of Entomology

Control of all Stored Food Pests

- Inspect, locate and discard all infested food items. Don't forget to look at intact boxes or containers because many insects can chew through cardboard and foil.
- If you find an infested food container, you can still save the food by freezing it for three or four days.
- Empty and vacuum cupboards or shelves. Pay special attention to cracks and corners. When you are done, empty your vacuum cleaner or toss the vacuum cleaner bag to prevent reinfestation.
- Do not use insecticides for controlling pantry pests or any other insects in a pantry area. Washing shelves with household cleaners won't have any effect on these pests. Removing infested items or vacuuming is enough.
- If insects keep showing up, go through all the steps above again but also check other rooms in the home for possible sources of an infestation.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

UNL Extension in Lancaster County educational resource 304 "Managing Insect Pests" is available at the extension office or online at <http://lancaster.unl.edu/enviro/pest/factsheets/304.htm>

Tips for Trapping Mice

Barb Ogg
UNL Extension Educator

Almost everyone has to deal with an occasional mouse in the house. Traps are the simplest and safest way to deal with mice inside homes.

It is important to start trapping as soon as you see droppings because mice are prolific breeders, producing six to ten litters continuously throughout the year. The average size litter is five to six babies and young mice can mate at six weeks. It doesn't take a math genius to realize if you ignore a mouse infestation for a while thinking they will disappear on their own (they won't), you will have a lot bigger problem later.

Snap Traps

Snap traps and glue boards are two inexpensive ways of trapping mice. The cheapest method is to use plain old snap traps.

What Type of Bait?

The Victor® Web site says to use peanut butter, oats, chocolate, pretzel (tied with string) or nesting materials, like a cotton ball (for females). In my opinion, a far more effective bait is a small piece of caramel. Unwrap a cube of caramel and soften it in your hand until you can knead it. Tear off a small piece of caramel and press it in the curl of the trap. One caramel can be used to bait several traps. The reason that caramels work well is that mice cannot lick the bait off (like they do with peanut butter), caramel cannot get rancid or

moldy and mice are very attracted to it. Cheese isn't a very good bait because mice don't really like it.

Where to Place Traps?

Place traps in areas where you see droppings or know that mice travel. Place the trap against the wall with the bait pedal facing the wall. There are two reasons for placing traps like this. First, mice tend to travel in pathways along walls rather than in open areas because they have poor eyesight and feel their way along vertical objects



Photo by UNL Extension Educator Barb Ogg

A piece of caramel can be effective mice bait. Place traps with bait pedal next to the wall.

with their whiskers. Placing the traps with the bait pedal next to the wall prevents mice from jumping backward to avoid getting trapped.

Use Enough Traps

One mistake trappers make is not using enough traps to get rid of the mice quickly. If the mouse population is high, use many traps. If you are concerned about children or pets, set traps before you go to bed and remove them when you

wake. Mice are generally nocturnal, although sometimes you can catch mice during the daytime.

When discarding a dead rodent, handle it with gloves and put it in a sealed plastic bag before placing it in the garbage. To make this easier, use a pair of pliers to dislodge the rodent from the trap. Traps can be reused, but, if you can't deal with a dead rodent, you can throw the trap away with the captured rodent.

Glue Boards

A slightly more expensive alternative to snap traps is to use glue boards, which catch and hold mice attempting to cross them just like flypaper catches flies. Again, place glue boards along walls where mice travel. Two or three glue boards placed side-by-side will be more effective than individual boards. Or, use larger glue boards designed for rats.

There are two types of glue boards. One is the flat type, where glue is placed on a flat piece of cardboard and covered with plastic film that must be removed. The second is the plastic tray type, consisting of a shallow plastic tray filled with glue. Bobby Corrigan, a nationally known rodent expert, says the flat type glue boards are more effective in catching rodents.

The glue is non-toxic, but very sticky so don't use glue boards where children or pets can contact them. If glue from a glue board contacts the fur of a pet or the skin of a child, it can be removed with mineral or vegetable oil. Glue boards should be checked daily and, if a mouse is caught, discard it in a plastic bag.

Disadvantages of glue boards is they lose their effectiveness in dusty areas and temperature extremes will influence the tackiness of the glue.

What About Ultrasonic Devices?

Mice can hear sounds in the ultrasonic range. However, a significant amount of research does not support the use of these devices as a practical and cost-effective method of controlling rodents. These devices are sold to unsuspecting people who would be better served by buying the cheaper and more effective snap trap.

Mice Seek Refuge in Your House

Did you know when temperatures dip, mice actually circle around your house and seek cracks big enough for them to enter? They are attracted to gusts of warm air and food smells. Mice are looking for warm places to overwinter because they don't survive cold temperatures very well.

Mice have a rapid metabolism, which means they must eat frequently to stay warm. Finding a warm place to overwinter means they don't have to eat as often and have a better chance of surviving.

To reduce mouse entry, you need to think like a mouse and look around your house exterior for any gaps that are 1/4 inch or larger. Mice are good climbers and can climb up your siding so don't ignore high places. Don't overlook spaces around and under exterior doors.

Seal any openings larger than 1/4 inch to exclude mice. Patching material must be smooth on the surface to prevent mice from pulling out or chewing through it. Seal cracks and openings in building foundations and utility openings with durable sealants. Make sure doors, windows and screens fit tightly. Replace or install door sweeps. Keep exterior doors closed.

Choosing Bird Seed

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Bird feeding provides an excellent opportunity for you to view 20 or more species common to Nebraska backyard feeders. When choosing seeds, learn about the types of bird you want to attract. This will also help you decide what types of feeders you want to use.

No matter what feeder you choose, wild birds prefer fresh, high-quality seed. Some commercial seed mixes may contain "filler" seeds and may not be as fresh. Read the package carefully. If there is a high percentage of fillers like

millet, cracked corn, oats, wheat or milo, the birds will pick out the few sunflower seeds and waste the rest. Some experienced bird feeders recommend 75 percent of the seed you offer should be black oil-type sunflower.

Try making your own mix. It may cost you a little more initially, but you'll have far less waste, so you'll end up saving money. Here is a blend you can try:

- 25 pounds of black-oil sunflower seed
- 10 pounds of white proso millet
- 10 pounds of cracked corn

Pour the seeds into a rodent-proof, metal container. A new, clean metal trash can works well.

You can use a broom handle to mix the seed up. Your container should be stored in a dry, cool place like an unheated garage.

Check the seed often for mold. If any seed appears questionable, throw it out. If you plan to store your bird seed in the house, keep it in the freezer to prevent pantry pest infestations.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

UNL Extension NebGuide G669 "Backyard Wildlife: Feeding Birds" is available at the extension office or online at <http://ianrpubs.unl.edu/wildlife/g669.htm>