



Mice & Rats in Wisconsin

Scratching noises in your walls? Droppings in the attic? It could be mice, or a rat. While there are multiple species of both, there are only three native to Wisconsin—the Deer Mouse, House Mouse, and Norway Rat. Learn more about these destructive rodents and how to identify them using the chart below.

	Deer Mouse	House Mouse	Norway Rat
Appearance			
Color/Length (without tail)	Golden or reddish brown; white chest and legs; 2 1/2 to 4 inches	Gray to light brown; light brown chest; 2 3/4 to 4 inches	Coarse brown with black fur; gray or white chest; 7 to 10 inches
Nose, Ears, and Eyes	Pointy nose; naked ears; prominent eyes; color blind	Pointy nose; small ears and eyes; color blind	Blunt nose; small ears and eyes; color blind
Tail	Same length as body; short, brown hair, white underside	Same length as body; nearly hairless with rounded scales	Shorter than body; hairless with rounded scales
Habitat	Suburban and rural areas. Live outdoors, unless food source depletes or weather is extreme	Urban and suburban areas, close to humans offering a food source and shelter	Urban and suburban areas, close to humans offering a food source and shelter
Food Source	Mostly insects, fruits, seeds and grains such as cereal	Mostly fruits, seeds and grains such as cereal, occasionally meat	Neophobic, avoiding anything they are unfamiliar with. Prefer unspoiled foods such as grains, fish, nuts and meats
Droppings	1/4 inch long; pointed ends	1/4 inch long; rod-like with pointed ends	3/4 inch long; rounded ends
Behavior	Nocturnal, forage at dusk and night; create burrows in surrounding fields; nest in garages and basements.	Nocturnal, forage at dusk and night; excellent climbers; create burrows; nest in attics, garages and basements	Nocturnal, forage at night; excellent swimmers; create burrows; use sewers as access points; nest in basements and garages
Life Cycle	Gestational period 21-37 days; birth litter of 3-11; 2-4 litters a year; lifespan 1-2 years	Gestational period 19-21 days; birth litter of 3-14; 5-10 litters a year; lifespan 1-3 years	Gestational period 21 days; birth litter of 7-14; 4-6 litters a year; lifespan 1-3 years

Signs of a Mouse Infestation

- Holes in food packaging or other types of packaging
- Nesting material: ripped paper, cardboard, clothing or other fibrous material
- Nest: ball of soft, shredded material about 5" in diameter
- Tooth or scratch marks on wooden baseboards, cabinets, windowpanes, doors, etc.
- Grease marks (rubs) on walls, baseboards, cabinets, windowpanes, doors, etc.
- Droppings: seed-shaped; about 1/4 inch long; black and wet when fresh, grayish and dry when old
- Tracks: less than 1/2 inch; four toes on front paws and five in back
- Chewed insulation or electrical wiring (potential fire hazard)
- Scratching sounds within walls
- Can fit through a hole the size of a pencil eraser



Signs of a Rat Infestation

- Food packaging containing holes about 2 inches in diameter
- Tooth or scratch marks on wooden baseboards, cabinets, windowpanes, doors, etc.
- Chewed electrical wire, piping or insulation (potential fire hazard)
- Can chew through sheet metal, lead pipes and concrete
- Grease marks (rubs) on walls, baseboards, cabinets, doors, etc.
- Droppings: dark pellets with blunted ends, about 3/4 inch in length and 1/4 inch in diameter
- Tracks: four toes on front feet and five on longer, hind feet; claw marks and/or tail mark often visible



Transmittable Diseases

Deer Mouse*

- Hantavirus Pulmonary Syndrome
- Salmonellosis

House Mouse*

- Leptospirosis
- Lymphocytic Choriomeningitis
- Rat Bite Fever
- Salmonellosis

Norway Rat*

- Leptospirosis
- Rat Bite Fever
- Salmonellosis
- Bubonic Plague
- Hemorrhagic Fever
- Murine Typhus



**May pose a serious health risk to humans and pets.*

How are rat and mice-borne diseases transmitted?

- Breathing in dust that is contaminated with rodent urine or droppings
- Direct contact with rodents, or their urine or droppings; possibly by contaminated food or water
- Bite wounds

Are mice or rats outwardly aggressive?

- According to the Center for Disease Control, Norway rats directly attack approximately 14,000 people a year in the U.S.
- Unlike rats, mice will avoid humans. They will not attack, but they may bite if handled.