



Pest Bulletin

August - September

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Rodents Cause Real Harm

Recently, five deer mice and one brush mouse collected in routine monitoring in the Mount Laguna area have tested positive for hantavirus. Hantavirus can cause deadly infections in people and there is no vaccine or cure. Hantavirus is only one of several serious health risks posed by mice and rats.

Here's how to protect you and your family:

Understand the Risk

People are exposed to viruses when rodents shed it in their urine, feces, and saliva. The matter dries and is stirred into the air where people can breathe it in. Rodents deposit bacteria from their fur and feet to on surfaces such as countertops, eating utensils, and the lids and packaging of food items. Plague, salmonella, rat bite fever, tapeworms, ringworm, typhoid fever, and typhus are spread by rodents and have occurred in Southern California. Hantavirus is only spread by wild mice.

The plague is transmitted through fleas that live on rodents. "It's important that individuals take precautions for themselves and their pets when outdoors, especially while walking, hiking and/or camping in areas where wild rodents are present. Human cases of plague are extremely rare but can be very serious."

— Dr. Nancy Williams

Rodent Awareness

Camping, hiking, or at home, be aware of the signs of rodents to avoid direct contact with rodents and the pathogens they leave behind. The two most common signs that are easily identified are droppings (feces) and gnawing.

Remember, viruses and bacteria are invisible to the naked eye. Assume that any area with signs of rodents is contaminated. Avoid the area or use the Wet Cleaning Method...even when you are camping!



Mouse Droppings fit inside this box: 1/4 inch long max.
(They are about the size and shape of short-grained rice.)



Rat Droppings fit inside this box: 1/2 to 3/4 inch long
(They may have blunt or pointed ends.)

The Wet Cleaning Method

We highly recommend following the CDC guidelines when cleaning up after rodents. Rats and mice carry and shed many human pathogens. Take precautions before and during clean-up of rodent-infested areas.

From the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (<https://www.cdc.gov/rodents/cleaning/index.html>):

“When I opened the wooden camp box at our campsite, I came eye to eye with a deer mouse. I yelped and the mouse fled. It was impossible to wet-clean the camp box so we declared it off limits and stored our gear elsewhere.”

— Thrasher Team Member

First, clean up any urine and droppings

Before starting clean-up of the space, ventilate the space by opening the doors and windows for at least 30 minutes to allow fresh air to enter the area. Use cross-ventilation and leave the area during the airing-out period.

When you begin cleaning, it is important that you do not stir up dust by sweeping or vacuuming up droppings, urine, or nesting materials.

- Wear rubber, latex, or vinyl gloves when cleaning urine and droppings.
- Spray the urine and droppings with a disinfectant or a mixture of bleach and water and let soak 5 minutes. The recommended concentration of bleach solution is 1-part bleach to 10 parts water. When using a commercial disinfectant, following the manufacturer’s instructions on the label for dilution and disinfection time.
- Use a paper towel to pick up the urine and droppings, and dispose of the waste in the garbage.
- After the rodent droppings and urine have been removed, disinfect items that might have been contaminated by rodents or their urine and droppings.

Next, clean and disinfect the whole area

- Mop floors and clean countertops with disinfectant or bleach solution.
- Steam clean or shampoo upholstered furniture and carpets with evidence of rodent exposure.
- Wash any bedding and clothing with laundry detergent in hot water if exposed to rodent urine or droppings.

Lastly, remove gloves, and thoroughly wash hands with soap and water (or use a waterless alcohol-based hand rub when soap is not available and hands are not visibly soiled).

Specific cleaning recommendations

The complete CDC guide to cleaning-up after rodents, includes special instructions for the topics below. <https://www.cdc.gov/rodents/cleaning/index.html>

- Clothing, Bedding, Stuffed Animals
- Carpets/Furniture
- Books, Papers and other Non-washable items
- Cabins, Sheds, Barns, or Other Outbuildings
- Attics, Basements, Crawlspace, and Other Storage Areas
- Cleaning and Disinfection of Vehicles with Rodent Infestations
- Air Ducts (heating and cooling ventilation systems)