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## The Pest Bulletin

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209 Commercial • Emporia, KS 66801 • (620) 342-4222

1129 Hayes Dr • Manhattan, KS 66502 • (785) 776-6063

# Rat and Mouse Myths—Busted!

**O.K.** *Let's have some fun!* We hear so many falsehoods about these pests—cover up the answers, and let's see if you can figure out the one true statement below, before you read the explanations.



### ANSWERS:

#### QUESTIONS-TRUE OR FALSE?

1. Rats and mice only become a problem where there is poor sanitation.
2. There are many species of rats and mice that cause problems indoors.
3. "Super rats" can grow as big as cats.
4. Electronic and ultrasonic devices are an effective way to control rodent populations.

1. FALSE. While it is true that rats and mice are much more likely to become a problem where there is poor sanitation, any home or business can be invaded by these pests. The truth is that rats and mice don't need much in terms of food or water to survive, and they are very adept at finding what they need even in well-maintained and clean homes.

2. TRUE. There are several kinds of rats and mice that invade homes. Each has slightly different habits.

3. FALSE. Mature male Norway rats, which are larger than the females, weigh up to a pound. Occasionally some are larger, and a few raised in captivity have come close, but never have reached, two pounds. Roof rats are slightly smaller. Most cats, in comparison, weigh 7-10 pounds.

4. FALSE. These devices don't claim to kill rodents; they claim to repel them. But the rodents are still around, and university tests haven't shown the devices to be practical or consistently effective.

### Green Pest Prevention Tip of the Month

**M**ake sure each of your downspouts is in good working order so rainwater doesn't back up and overflow. If water doesn't flow freely, try flushing the downspout with a hose. If that doesn't work, clear it with a plumber's snake, working from the bottom up.

## Ants: A Common Fall Pest



**W**hile some pests take a rest in the fall, others become much worse during these months ahead. Ants are a serious problem all year, but they can be particularly invasive in the fall.

Ants are opportunistic—they are always invading new areas seeking food, moisture and shelter. During the fall both heavy rains and less food outdoors can also drive ants indoors. Entire ant colonies can even be unknowingly brought indoors in the soil of potted plants, or in packages and other items. So ant control is a continuous process to battle these ever-present invaders.

Many invading ant species are not native to our area. They have arrived from other countries and are spreading around the country. These "exotic" ants

usually have multiple-queen colonies, which means they can easily out-reproduce many native ants that usually have just one queen per colony. Exotic ants destroy native ants both around structures as well as out in nature, and may attack endangered animals as well, upsetting the balance of nature.

Sometimes the invader ants hurt the ecosystem in unexpected ways—for instance, it's been documented that certain lizards that normally feed on native ants in Southern California lost their food source when invading Argentine ants came in and wiped out the native ants. The lizards won't touch the Argentine ants—they apparently taste so bad that the lizards starve to death rather than eating them.

If you or a neighbor, friend, or relative are being invaded by ants, call us for expert control.



Thank you for your business and referrals!

## Mosquitoes Breeding in Your Yard?

Most people don't realize that mosquitoes can be breeding right in their own yards. While some species breed in ponds and other larger bodies of water, others only need a thimble-full of water to breed in. And they develop rapidly too. For example, bird bath water needs to be drained at least once a week to prevent adult mosquitoes from emerging. This year there have been an unusual number of floods in parts of the country, so mosquitoes have had ample places to multiply.



Mosquitoes that don't require a lot of water can breed in natural places like tree holes and the center of bromeliad plants, as well as places created by man, such as saucers around potted plants, bird baths, pet dishes, and plugged roof gutters. Discarded vehicle tires become a perfect habitat for many kinds of mosquito larvae, including a number of invasive species and mosquitoes capable of carrying dengue and encephalitis. Have you ever tried to get all the water out of an old tire? It isn't easy at all.

**BOTTOM LINE:** pack sand in tree holes, get rid of water sources mosquitoes might breed in, drain and refill pet and wildlife water at least weekly, and ask us about what steps to take to prevent mosquitoes from breeding in rain barrows, ponds and other sources of water.

## Bed Bug Hiding Spots

A new study in 15 Cincinnati, Ohio, apartments found that mattresses were the most common places bed bugs were hiding, followed by upholstered couches and chairs, bedding and bedding skirts, bed frames and headboards, walls and ceilings, box springs, and behind baseboards. Other studies have found box springs are a more common hiding place than mattresses. In a small number of cases, bed bugs were also found hiding in more unusual places like dressers, nightstands, and even appliances.



Bedbugs are becoming a much more common problem in the nations' college dorm rooms. For example, the University of California, Berkeley, residence halls had to be treated for bed bugs at least six times last school year, up from no incidents the previous year.

## Your Questions Answered

**Q.** *Why is regular pest management service so important?*

**A.** *Regular service has become more important than ever, for a couple of reasons. First, as much as possible, we want to prevent pests from ever becoming a problem, rather than react and have to control a pest population that has already gotten out of control. Because pests are a problem year-round, this requires regular, professional service that both prevents pest problems from occurring and catches and stops them in their early stages, before they have had a chance to become widespread. This is especially true of the increasing number of pests that can affect the health of people or pets.*



Second, we are constantly on the look-out to provide a "greener" service. We've always been proud to be considered "Guardians of Our Environment", and no less so today. This means in part that we use today far more carefully picked, shorter-lived pesticides that are either natural or based on natural products, than ever before. Back in the days of DDT and chlordane, one application was fine for a long period of time; that is just not the case today.

Because each season brings a different set of pests, on-going service is by far your *most convenient* and *effective service*, and your *best value*.

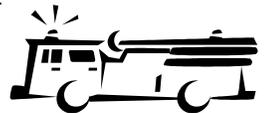
## Pest Trivia!



A Virginia man was bitten by a **juvenile rattlesnake** recently when he returned from a vacation, reached inside his luggage, and felt a sharp pain. No one knows how the foot-long snake got into his luggage. The man was treated at a local hospital and released. **NOTE:** Bites from baby rattlers are not usually as dangerous as bites from adults, contrary to the old wives' tale that says the juvenile bites are worse

Burrowing rodents are a major cause of failure of levees. In one case this summer, despite heroic efforts by townspeople and the National Guard, the tunnel of just one **burrowing muskrat** caused the levee to break in Winfield, Missouri, causing water to pour in through a 30 foot wide gap.

A new ant species called "**crazy raspberry ants**" have spread to five Houston-area counties since it was first discovered in 2002. Like other crazy ants, these are particularly prolific because each colony has not one but many egg-laying queens. And, like fire ants and certain other ants, for some reason they are attracted to electrical equipment. This propensity has already caused all sorts of unexpected problems, such as setting off fire alarms.



In New Haven, Connecticut, a man thought it was a smart idea to **smoke out** ants and beetles along the wall outside his apartment. Unfortunately the fire ignited inside the wall and spread. The fire was put out by the local fire department, but the man had to vacate his apartment because of the damage. Needless to say, our professional techniques are much safer, and more effective.