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The Pest Bulletin

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Rat & Mouse Myths

All sorts of wild myths about rats and mice circulate around through neighborhood gossip and late night talk shows, and on the internet. Here are some straight facts.

MYTH #1: "We have rats as big as cats around here." In reality, the vast majority of adult city rats usually weigh just under a pound. Larger rats are sometimes found in other places, such as farms. The very heaviest rats recorded thus far weigh in the range of 1.3 to 1.8 pounds.

MYTH #2: "This city has one rat for every person." There may be, but



no one can tell very accurately because there are so many factors to take into account. There may in fact be up to several dozen rats per person in some areas, and fewer than one rat per person in other areas.

MYTH #3: "Rats and mice have poor eyesight." They have poor vision beyond three feet, but they don't need to see further. They are sensitive to motion up to 50 feet, and their sense of smell and hearing are both better than ours. They can even locate objects to within a few inches just by sound.

MYTH #4: "Cats control mouse and rat problems." Cats may kill an occasional young or old rodent, but they seldom control an infestation, and healthy adult rats are just too big for them to tackle. In one study in India there were more rats in homes with cats than homes without them. Cats do vary greatly in their interest and ability to catch mice and rats. Most dogs tend to shy away from rats, although the rat terrier is considered a good "rat dog".



Pest Prevention Tip of the Month

Once opened, pet food and pet treats should be placed in tightly sealed glass or plastic jars and labeled. Not only will this keep them fresher longer, it will also keep out insects and rodents. Use garbage cans with tight-fitting lids to store very large bags of pet food.

Cockroaches and Disease



Nobody likes cockroaches! They invade your home, they look and smell ghastly,

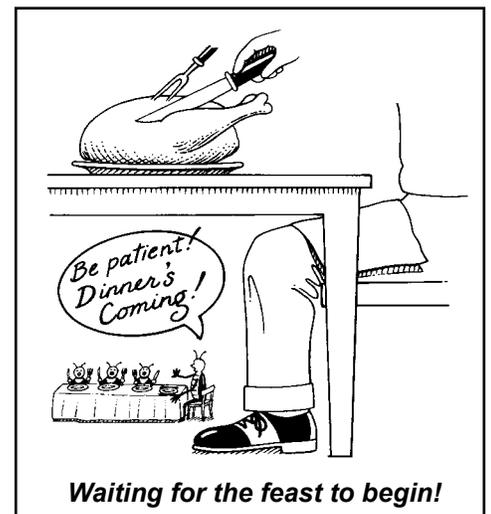
and they can be embarrassing! They also spoil food, and can short-circuit and damage everything from kitchen clocks to computers. But while all these things are important, there are other far more vital reasons to hate cockroaches.

Roaches are known to harbor a huge variety of bacteria and viruses that cause serious illnesses, including **dysentery, bubonic plague, typhoid fever, gangrene, and food poisoning.** Plus they carry a variety of **hookworms, pinworms, tapeworms, and roundworms.** Cockroaches acquire disease organisms easily—they crawl in dark, moist places and quickly become infected when they clean their legs and antennae with their mouth. They'll also

eat most anything. Later they can pass the germs on to you and your family and pets as they crawl around the kitchen and eat your food.

How often do roaches actually pass germs to us or our pets? No one knows for sure, but by controlling roaches entire epidemics have been stopped in their tracks. In one study, nearly 90% of the roaches in New York City were found to carry three different kinds of bacteria that cause food poisoning. This creates a huge health hazard.

More recently cockroaches have been shown to be an important cause of asthma. One study found that 8.6% of the children in New York City have asthma—double the national rate—and that *cockroaches were the #1 cause of the asthma.* The allergens come from proteins in roach droppings, their bodies and cast off skins.



Sweet-toothed Bears



Damage from black bears to forest trees has been increasing in recent years in our western states. To relieve their hunger after their long winter sleep, the bears in early spring strip off pieces of bark and scrape their teeth over the sweet cambium layer underneath. Sap sweetness varies in trees so some bears go from tree to tree until they find a particularly tasty one. Their gnawing may completely denude the tree of bark around the base, which kills it. Even if they just strip off sections, it can open the tree to decay and weaken it.

In one study just published, bear hairs were collected from stripped trees and compared with the DNA of hair taken from anesthetized bears. Out of 240 bears, only 78 were causing most of the damage. It was also confirmed that "bad" bears have more tooth decay because of the sugary sap. As a result of this study, just looking at an (anesthetized) bear's teeth is enough to determine if it is one of the "bad news bears" that strips tree bark.

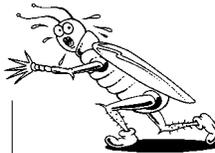
Some forests are experiencing severe damage from these bears, much more than in past years. Not only are bear numbers much higher than in the past, but forestry practices like thinning out weak trees to maximize growth of the remaining trees have created faster-growing trees that tend to be sweeter. According to one forester, "Were creating salad bars for these bears."

Your Questions Answered

Q. Where do mice nest indoors?"

A. Mice may tuck their nest away in most any dark, well-hidden place. They especially like cluttered closets, attics, basements, and garages. Mice often nest in, behind, and under appliances like stoves and refrigerators, above suspended ceilings and behind walls. They also nest in bed box springs and hollow areas inside couches and doors. One common but frequently overlooked nesting area for mice is the fiberglass insulation liner around stoves.

Mice can withstand wide extremes in temperature. They have even been found in heating ducts in the upper stories of skyscrapers. Amazingly, a strain of wild house mice has been reared for 10 generations at 24° F (minus 3° C)! Although the size of the broods got smaller, the mice survived very well as long as they had food and nesting material.



On-Going Service is Best

Just as regular scheduled check-ups with your doctor, dentist, and auto mechanic are prudent, our regular service is best at protecting you and your home from pests year-round. Some pests, like ants, can be problems all year, but other pests are seasonal, with each new season bringing its own unique pest problems. Fall and winter bring more rats, mice and certain fall-invading insect pests. Regular, on-going service is always more convenient, easier, more effective, and your best value!

Did You Know?

- In September, in the German town of Drebach, a roofer was attacked by a swarm of wasps. To protect himself, he grabbed his blowtorch, directing it into the air and lit one of the wasps on fire. The insect flew back to its nest, which was located in the rafters, setting it, the roof and the attic on fire.
- In October, a colony of 1.2 million South American army ants, which normally can take down even birds and small animals in their path, was completely destroyed by lowly hide beetles at the California Academy of Sciences in San Francisco. Hide beetles are related to common carpet beetles. The beetles were able to eat the ant eggs and larvae, but the ants weren't able to bite the beetle larvae because of the long hairs which cover their body. So, allowing South American army ants to roam through your house will not completely rid it of pests. (Thankfully, we don't have these ants in the U.S.)
- According to a recent University of Southern California study, "Children exposed to cockroaches before age one had over twice as much risk of suffering from asthma compared to children with no exposure."
- Small tree frogs called *coqui*, native to Puerto Rico, have invaded the Hawaiian islands and are becoming a major pest. The male frogs produce ear-piercing mating calls at night, which can reach from 70 to 90 decibels. Comparable to a loud vacuum cleaner or garbage disposal, these noises are disturbing the peaceful Hawaiian nights.



THANK YOU!

Once again at this time of year, we wish to thank our loyal customers, many of whom have become our friends over the years. We appreciate the opportunity to serve you! Thank you also for your many referrals. Our company truly grows on referrals, and we are very thankful you are making our growth possible! We wish you all happiness and prosperity during the coming year!