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## The Pest Bulletin

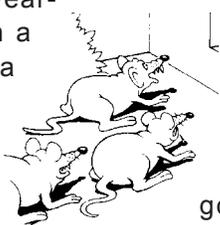
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# Rats & Mice—BIG Fall Problems

Rats and mice are trouble year-round, but they, along with a number of other pests, are a particular problem from late summer through early winter. It's at this time that rodents living and breeding outdoors begin to look for better shelter, and our homes and businesses become prime targets for invasion.



The size of a hole rats and mice can crawl through is totally dependent on their skull size, because if they can squeeze their head through, the rest of their body will fit as well. Incredibly, a

young mouse can easily fit through a hole **smaller than a dime**, and a young rat can squeeze through a hole **smaller than a quarter**.

Both rats and mice are good climbers, too, so the openings they enter do not have to be at ground level. They can easily find their way onto roof tops where there are often gaps and openings of various kinds. They simply sniff around until they find food or warm air currents escaping, and then try to enter at those points.

Mice can enter any small opening, and rats can easily enlarge openings by gnawing their way through building materials. A persistent rat can even gnaw through hard substances like lead, aluminum, and mortar, though their first choice is to gnaw through softer materials. Amazingly, their teeth can apply up to *8,000 pounds* of pressure per square inch! You can easily see why rats and mice so frequently find their way indoors, and need McKinzie's professional control.

### Pest Prevention Tip of the Month

Because of the large number of fall-invading pests, it's a good idea to caulk cracks on your roof and outside walls. Also carefully inspect and seal gaps around the edges of your windows and doors, as well as around other openings.

## Boxelder Bugs Fall Invaders, Too!



Boxelder Bug

Boxelder bugs are one of many pests that cause problems twice—when they invade homes during the fall, and then again during the winter

and spring on warm days as they crawl and fly about indoors. Many other fall invaders do this same thing, especially cluster flies and the new Asian lady beetles.

Boxelder bugs seek a dry, sheltered place to spend the winter beginning in late summer and early fall. These bugs are black or dark brown, with bright orange-red lines on their backs and wings. They may appear in large numbers, especially on the warm sides of homes, patios, tree trunks, etc., eventually moving indoors as the weather cools.

Although boxelder bugs don't bite,

they are an incredible nuisance because there can be so many of them. They also emit a strong, foul odor when crushed, and their excrement will spot curtains, furnishings, and clothing.

Boxelder bugs breed on a variety of trees, and may fly up to two miles in search of a building or other place to spend the winter. But they become especially abundant where there is a seed-bearing (female) boxelder tree nearby. The young boxelder bugs feed on these winged seeds, as well as on tender twigs and leaves.

Interestingly, new studies show that some of the boxelder bugs that invade homes die before spring arrives, especially due to lack of moisture. But by eating their dead companions, more survive. It's a hard life indeed for these home-invading pests!



## Is Swatting Mosquitoes OK?

### A new controversy . . .

You may be tired of arguments, debates, and controversies, with the elections fast approaching, but here's one more issue to ponder, that you probably never thought about: TO SWAT OR NOT!

Do you usually swat at mosquitoes, slapping yourself in the process? Or do you flick them away? A new study claims it is smarter and safer to flick rather than swat a mosquito.

The July issue of the *New England Journal of Medicine* reports on a woman who died of a muscle infection from a fungus called *Brachiola algerae*. The

doctors were puzzled because this fungus is known to be found only in mosquitoes and other insects. But unlike diseases such as West Nile Virus and malaria, you can't contract the fungus when a mosquito bites you, because it's not in mosquito saliva, but in other parts of the mosquito. The doctors believe the woman must have been infected when she swatted a mosquito as it was biting her, thus crushing its body parts directly into the bite wound.

So, is it better to **swat**, or **flick**? This controversy will probably be with us for a long time. One of the authors of the study says that it would be wiser, if the mosquito is in the middle of its bite, to flick the mosquito off rather than squashing it. But how can you know for certain how long the mosquito has been biting you? On the other hand, if you flick it away, rather than ending its life right then, it could go on and bite someone else, or even come back and bite the hand that flicked it!

No doubt, this is an important matter to think about. Take your time deciding, but not while a mosquito is biting you—fast action of some kind is needed then!



## Your Questions Answered



**Q. What is meant by "The dose makes the poison?"**

**A.** The famous physician and chemist Paracelsus said something nearly 500 years ago that is just as relevant today as it was then. He observed, "Solely the dose determines that a thing is not a poison."

You wouldn't purposely eat poison, would you? But we all do daily! When we take an aspirin for a headache, get a doctor's prescription for an antibiotic to battle a disease, or sprinkle a dash of salt on our food, we are ingesting known poisons. All of these, even common table salt, are deadly if you consume too much. Yet we know that these things will not kill us—they very definitely make our lives better. We are using them in exact quantities that make them highly effective

for a specific *purpose*. When used at anything other than the proper dose, they become either dangerous, or useless.

Pesticides are like this. When used properly, they have the marvelous ability to control destructive and damaging pests, improving the quality of our lives. But they are all poisons and must be used carefully. Most must be used by professionals who receive continual training in the safe and effective use of these products, and many also require proper equipment to apply them correctly and safely.

We want you to know that we are committed to using the proper dose of products that are the most effective and safest in their category, allowing us to bring you the safest and most effective professional pest control service possible!



## Mouse Allergens Common in Homes

According to the June issue of the *Journal of Allergy and Clinical Immunology*, 82 percent of all homes and apartments in this country contain some level of mouse allergen, and 22 percent harbor allergen levels high enough to trigger allergic reactions and asthma attacks. The study was conducted by the *National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences*.

Allergens come from house mouse shed hairs, droppings, and urine. Mice deposit their urine often because they use it to communicate with other mice, much the way dogs use their urine to mark their territories.

## Stupid Human Tricks

### Recent True Stories:

- A worker at a sporting goods store in an upstate New York shopping mall wanted to kill a spider so he doused it with a flammable liquid and lit it on fire. The resulting blaze quickly spread, eventually engulfing the storage area in flames. Smoke from the fire then filled the entire mall, forcing it to close for the day. There was serious smoke and water damage throughout the store, as well as in several nearby stores. The spider is still on the lam, but the worker was charged with fourth-degree arson, a felony.



- A California homeowner discovered rats were entering his home through a toilet. He purchased an incendiary device intended to be used in gopher holes, and dropped it down a plumbing vent on his roof. The ensuing flames melted a plastic elbow in the pipe and his roof caught fire, causing \$80,000 in damage.