



## **Rats! It's that Time of Year Again....**

Commensal rodents, such as rats and mice, often move into homes with the arrival of colder temperatures. They can gnaw upholstery, books, pipes, irrigation systems and garbage cans causing a lot of damage and sometimes even starting fires from chewing electrical wires.

Trapping is a common way to eliminate rodents. Common traps include glueboards, snap traps and live traps. When using traps, a food item, or bait, is typically used to lure the rodent. Good baits include food items such as peanut butter, fruit, ketchup and jelly. Traps are best utilized when placed along walls where rodents prefer to move. When using snap traps, place traps perpendicular to the wall and place several traps together in succession. It may also help to place traps out with food bait for a couple of days without setting the traps to allow the rodents to get used to getting food from them. Once they begin to take the bait, you can rebait the trap and set it to capture the rodent. Traps can be reused. When disposing of rodents either wear gloves or use a plastic bag to release the rodent from the trap.

There are also commercial baits available to poison rodents. If you decide to use baits, **do not** place baits where non-target organisms can gain access. It is good practice to buy tamper-resistant bait stations to hold bait products to avoid dogs, cats or even children from consuming the bait. Many baits are grain based, so it is important to dispose of the bait once the rodent problem is resolved. Rodent bait left for long periods of time will often lead to insect pests moving into the area to feed on the grain in the bait.

Once rodents are removed from the structure, the home should be sealed to exclude the pests from moving back in. Holes can be sealed with hardware cloth. Check around the outside of the home as well as in the attic for openings. Also, trim back any tree branches overhanging the roof to remove an easy access to the home.

For more information, contact Wizzie Brown, Texas Cooperative Extension Program Specialist at 512.854.9600.

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