

7 TIPS

FOR DARK SPACE RODENT CONTROL

Harnessing knowledge, deep AI learning and digital advancements to increase rodent control business, customer satisfaction

In the past decade, changing weather patterns and other factors have contributed to rodent control becoming a larger part of PMP business. In fact, according to the 2018 Rodent Control Market Survey, 61 percent of PMPs said rodent control has become a “significantly” greater part of business in the last five years.

The three main rodents for which PMPs receive calls are house mice, roof rats and Norway rats. They thrive in dark spaces such as attics, drop down ceilings, and basements. With the right knowledge, strategies and advanced digital tools, PMPs can enjoy great success in eradicating these “dark space” rodent populations and earn more business. These seven tips will help any PMP take his or her rodent control service to a new level.

TIP

01

Study Rodent Biology

Understanding the biology and anatomy of house mice, roof rats and Norway rats is the foundation for successful rodent control.

Here are some basics about each rodent:

House Mice



- **Head & body length:** 5 to 7 inches; 3 to 4-inch tails
- **Weight:** ½ ounce
- **Color:** light brown and gray, sometimes white
- Females birth up to 60 in a lifetime, with a gestation period of 19 to 21 days
- Live close to humans for food; lifespan of nine months to 1 year

Roof Rats



- **Head & body length:** 6 to 8 inches, 7 to 10-inch tails
- **Weight:** 5 to 9 ounces, some up to 12 ounces
- **Color:** black or brown with gray, white or brown underbellies
- Females produce up to 40 young per year with gestation between 21 and 23 days
- Greasy fur, scaly tail; live in high places, attics, trees and in walls; lifespan of 1 year

Norway Rats



- **Head & body length:** 7 to 9.5 inches, 6 to 8-inch tails
- **Weight:** about 8 ounces
- **Color:** brown with gray or white undersides
- Females produce 4 to 6 litters of 6 to 12 a year; gestation between 21 and 23 days
- Heavy-bodied, blunt muzzle with small ears and eyes

TIP

02

Understand the Rodent's Behavior and Diet

House mice, roof rats and Norway rats are nocturnal and dwell in dark spaces in and around structures. Roof rats prefer warm climates in states along the Pacific or southern Atlantic coasts, but have migrated north along the Atlantic coast and even inland. House mice and Norway rats, however, are generally found everywhere around the country.

Behavior traits

Roof rats and house mice are great climbers and can make their way up walls, power lines, tree limbs and other structures to make their nests. Roof rats prefer to live most of their lives above ground level, whereas house mice in just about any dark place. Norway rats are poor climbers and prefer to burrow underground or live at ground level. Their nests have been found beneath concrete slabs, around streams, ponds and even in garbage dumps. They often construct nests from shredded paper, cloth or fibrous materials.

Roof rats are known to chew on electrical wire, cardboard boxes and furniture. Gnaw marks on furniture or other wood are signs that any of the three rodents may be present. Roof rats and Norway rats tend to be neophobic, or have a genuine fear of new objects, so a change in environment encourages them to shift travel patterns. All three rodents like to enter homes when nighttime temperatures drop. They will travel for food, but prefer it to be as close to the nest as possible.



What they eat

Roof rats are omnivores but prefer grains, fruit, nuts, tree bark and seeds. Norway rats are less picky. They will eat almost anything but prefer grains, meats, fish nuts, and some fruit. House mice, on the other hand, desire cereals and grains, but all three rodents, if they're hungry enough, will try just about anything.

TIP

03

Evaluate the Periphery, Then Structures

Before looking for rodent access points on a building, log onto Google Earth to survey surrounding areas. Pay attention to undeveloped fields, open terrain, water sources, landscaping, nearby powerlines and potential food sources. As you look closer to the building, watch for decorative landscaping along building walls, wood piles or trash receptacles near a structure. These are all be potential harborage zones. Here are a few questions you may ask yourself when looking around a building:



- How is garbage collected and what is the condition of exterior garbage storage sites?
- How is the area maintained and are there any lingering food sources for rodents?
- Is the structure leaking? Are there doors that don't close completely?
- Are there areas near doors where employees congregate, say, for a cigarette break?

When examining the actual building, assess penetrations. Look for cables or pipes entering the building that require larger holes as well as deteriorating soffit or roof vents. And remember, wires or trees adjacent to a structure are pathways into a roof or attic space.

TIP

04

Look for Travel Paths, Signs of Infestation

Rodents prefer predictable pathways between their nest and food or water. They're afraid of humans and scurry away, especially if seen in daylight. In attics, roof rats and mice may travel along fire sprinkler lines, joists and boards to access food. Roof rats and Norway rats also move along outdoor irrigation lines. Signs of infestation or travel pathways include:

- Droppings
- Grease marks on walls or areas between landscaped zones
- Gnaw marks on wood or furniture
- Damaged electrical wires
- Pet distress

Remember: When identifying a travel pathway, think of biology and behavior traits. Roof rats won't visit ground-level baits; Norway rats won't visit an attic for food. Mice, however, could be found high and low.

TIP

05

Use Information to Set Traps Correctly

After you've identified potential travel pathways, it's time to develop a plan for setting baited traps. Keep these insights in mind:

- Place traps in high activity zones you've identified.
- Remember, most pathways will be quiet, dark and out of the way of humans.
- Avoid areas that have had ongoing trapping efforts.
- Place some droppings around a trap or bait station.
- If you're killing them, but not fully eliminating them, there may be a group somewhere outside the building area. Address that population too.



TIP

06

Choose the Right Tools and Technology

Today, the PMP's toolbox is more sophisticated than ever before. In fact, AI (artificial intelligence) now integrates with some bait and trap systems to enhance monitoring and capture. First, let's look at how traps alone have progressed.

A new take on old traps

Snap traps can be difficult to secure to pipes, boards or joists, and even stay on floors without being damaged or kicked. So, one solution is to house the snap trap *inside* a station.

VM Products' EZ Snap Seeker is a pre-loaded snap trap inside a secure station with push-lock design for quick and easy opening. It's designed for tight spaces, drop down ceilings and attics and has a cored-out entry that force flows the rodent into the station. Two slots on the bottom allow for zip ties to, either vertically or horizontally, secure it to pipes, tree limbs or rafters. From the rodent's point of view, it sees through to the other side of the box, giving a sense of safety to enter the station.



The Next Level: Digital monitoring and AI

Monitoring technology is key to eradication and long-term prevention. Today's digital offerings go well beyond cameras and video. VM Products' PestOptix and Interceptor lines create a competitive advantage for PMPs.

PestOptix is a camera monitoring system with more than two years of research and supervised data input driving its deep AI learning capabilities. PestOptix:

- Analyzes thousands of images daily, separating false alerts from real rodent activity
- Offers reports and analytics and real-time rodent alerts
- Becomes more accurate the longer it stays in an environment
- Alerts via phone app within moments of image capture
- Is accessible from most smart devices and integrates with common CRM platforms



PestOptix works with the **Interceptor** line of digital trap and bait stations and operates on the same principles as modern home security systems. Interceptor stations are versatile, scalable, affordable, and virtually impervious to installation error. The system comes with dedicated routers that auto-connect for easy installation on Wi-Fi or wireless networks.

Think of PestOptix and Interceptor devices as tiny lunar rovers placed in dark, hard-to-reach environments to report on all pest activity!

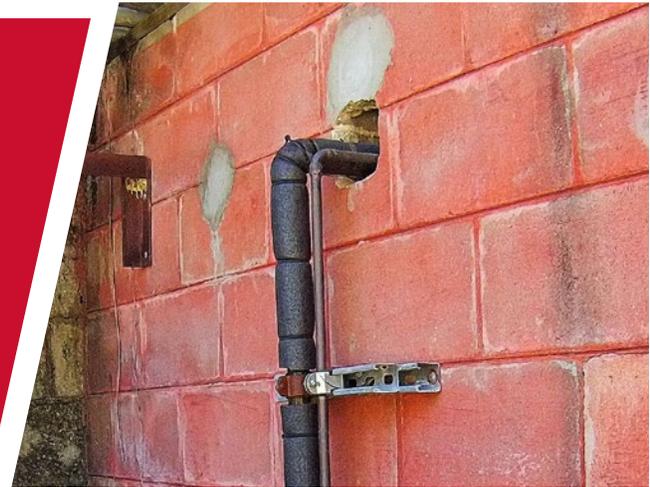
TIP

07

Teach Clients About Long-Term Prevention

No eradication effort is complete without educating the customer on what's required to keep rodents away permanently. Effective prevention tips include:

- Properly sealing windows, vents and penetrations
- Trimming back trees and shrubs near a structure
- Cleaning up fallen debris from fruit trees
- Fixing leaky sprinkler heads
- Clearing away outdoor pet water dishes and birdbaths
- Making sure garbage cans have tight-fitting lids
- Storing cereals and dry foods in air-tight containers



Conclusion

Rodent control presents a unique business opportunity for PMPs who can effectively handle infestations. When we understand the biology and behaviors of rodents, we can better predict their travel patterns and develop a successful eradication plan. Digital technology, AI and trap advancements offer another layer of assurance for PMPs and their clients. To learn more about VM Products, visit vmproducts.com.