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HOW TO

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**PROTECT YOUR  
ATTIC FROM  
RATS & MICE  
THIS WINTER**

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When rats or mice get in the attic, trouble always follows. Because their teeth are always growing, rats and mice have to constantly grind them down by gnawing on anything they can find; in your home, this can range from walls and ceilings, to sealed food containers, to hazardous materials like electrical wires. If that wasn't enough, their droppings, urine, and even dead bodies can leave lasting odors and even spread disease.

Rats or mice in the home is never a good thing. For the good of your home and the people living inside it, you have to protect your home from rodent infestation this winter.

## **WHY RATS AND MICE BREAK IN DURING WINTER**

Regardless of the species, the likelihood of a pest break-in only increases as temperatures drop. In the winter months, animals are always on the search for a nest that's safe, warm, and close to a food source - and if they can't find one, they'll make one.

Unfortunately, the attic in most homes is more than enough to meet all three of these criteria - which is exactly why attic pest infestations are so common in the winter.

In the southeastern United States, the three most populous rodent breeds are the Norway rat, roof rat, and house mouse. Like their squirrel cousins, these rodents are great climbers; this combined with their strong gnawing teeth make them excellent at getting into hard-to-reach areas of the home.

With urban development on the rise, wild rodents are constantly being pushed inward toward human settlements to survive. They may only be looking for a safe place to live, but if that place happens to be your home, it can put your own health in jeopardy. It's inevitable that some attics will come under rodent infestation this winter - make sure it doesn't happen to you.

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# Winter Warning Signs of Rat & Mice Infestation

If you're experiencing a rodent infestation, or are afraid you could be, perform a thorough inspection of your home, starting with the exterior and then moving inside. These types of rodents can squeeze through holes as small as an inch in diameter, so above all else, focus on finding any gaps or tears that could present an entry point.

Inspect your home thoroughly for any of the following warning signs:

## Odor

Between the rodents' natural odor and the buildup of droppings and urine in the nest, most homes with rodent infestations end up with a heavy, musky stench throughout. If you've suddenly started picking up on unexplained bad smells, a rat nest could be the source.

## Chewed Wires and Pipes

While there are a number of pests that like to gnaw on wires and pipes, rats are the worst offenders. Examine the coverings on any wires or pipes you can find around the house. If the internals are exposed, it may be time to hire a professional to safely handle the problem.

## Droppings

Droppings usually resemble small brown grains or rice, but can vary in size based on species: rat droppings are generally around  $\frac{1}{2}$ - $\frac{3}{4}$  inch long while mice droppings are about  $\frac{1}{8}$ - $\frac{1}{4}$  inch long. These can be anywhere in the house, but if the attic is suffering a rodent infestation, you're likely to find droppings all over the place.

## Rodent Corpses

Along with droppings, decaying mice or rat carcasses are another huge contributor to the awful odor associated with rodent infestations. Remember, even if they're dead now, they still had to get into your home somehow - if you start finding dead rodents around the home, you can be certain that they have living relatives still inside your walls.

## **Grease Smears**

Rats and mice have grease in their fur that leaves damaging marks on any pieces of wood or siding they come into contact with. As you inspect your home, check the walls and sidings for any discolored areas that could be attributed to rodent rubbing.

## **Tampered Food Packaging**

Rats and mice are both notorious for breaking into sealed food sources, especially pet food containers. Inspect the packaging on every piece of food in the pantry for any holes or signs of chewing, and throw out anything that might have been contaminated.

## **Shredded Insulation**

In the attic, mice especially love to tear up any insulation they can find. If the insulation in your attic is obviously ripped, or the top of the insulation looks clumped together and has snowcaps on it, you've probably got a rodent nest somewhere up there.

## **Nest Materials**

If there are rodents in your attic, they've made a nest somewhere. If you find clumps of paper, lint, insulation, grass, and other light materials all in one spot, you may have stumbled upon the source of the infestation.

## **Footprints or Tail Trails**

Outside the home, mice and rats leave paw prints and tiny lines from their tails as they scamper about. In the winter, these tracks are much easier to see in the snow.

## **Activity**

Rodents are nocturnal, so most homeowners probably won't actually see them running around, though they may hear them scampering about at night. However, if you do see a rat or mouse in the house during the daytime, that indicates a severe infestation - probably time to get an exterminator on the phone.

## **Related Problems**

Rats and mice love to gnaw on anything they can get their paws on; consequently, a rodent infestation often brings a host of other problems with it. If your roof has suddenly sprung a leak or you've started to see bugs all around your home, it's worth considering that a rodent could be the culprit. Since rodents love to chew on electrical wires, many homeowners are alerted to an infestation after experiencing repeated electrical issues.

# Finding and Blocking Squirrel Entry Points

Rodents can climb on or chew through almost any surface, giving them the ability to break into a home from virtually anywhere. However, some areas are much more likely entry points than others. As you inspect your home, here are some likely problem areas to address:

## ROOF AND CHIMNEY

While they may not be as proficient at climbing as their squirrel cousins, rats and mice are still capable of getting into your attic by chewing their way through your roof. Inspect your roofline from the ground for any signs of rodent damage, and consider having a roofing specialist climb up top and inspect specific problem areas, such as the flashing at the chimney base.

## THE ATTIC

Once you've inspected your roof exterior, head up to the attic. First, inspect the area with all of the lights on, taking note of any holes or chewed areas you can find. Once you've identified the immediately-visible problems, cover up the windows and turn off all the lights; if any light is still getting inside, it can be traced back to a hole somewhere.

Attic vents are a common problem area that can be sealed by fastening a ¼-inch wired hardware cloth on top of them, making sure to extend the cloth about two inches beyond the hole in every direction and securing the cloth with staples, U nails, or regular nails. Once reinforced with metal screws, this screen should keep your attic safe from rats, mice, squirrels, and other small animals - just make sure to remove the existing pests from the house before sealing the holes!

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## ROOF AND CHIMNEY

Most squirrels get into a home's attic through the roof, so inspect yours thoroughly for any signs of damaged or missing shingles and replace as necessary. Likewise, look for any holes in the roof line and seal them as quickly as possible.

Gaps in the flashing at the chimney base are another common squirrel entry point, so install steel caps around the base to keep them out. These caps can range in price from about \$40 to over \$1000, so do your research to find the best fit for your roof before you make a purchase.

## THE ATTIC

First, inspect the attic with the lights on, looking for any holes or signs of infestation and taking note of any problem areas. Once that's complete, turn off all the lights in the attic and block any windows. If any light is still getting inside, you can probably trace it back to a hole somewhere in the roof or siding.

Attic vents are a common problem area, so fasten a ¼-inch wire hardware cloth over them to prevent entry. Extend the cloth two inches beyond the hole in all directions to stop squirrels from gnawing around it, and secure the cloth with a staples, U nails, or regular nails. Reinforce the cloth with sheet metal screws.

## THE GARAGE

Many of the mice and rats that get into your attic first got entry to your home through the garage. Since it's at the ground-level, it's a much easier entry point for a rat or mouse than the roof, and usually contains a wealth of potential nesting materials and (in the case of pet owners with dog or cat food containers and water bowls in the garage) even a steady food supply.

As with the attic, inspect your garage from the inside and out for any signs of tears or other damage. Be on particular lookout for droppings as well as shredded newspaper or magazines that's been used to create a nest.

## OTHER COMMON ENTRY POINTS

Beyond these key areas, be on the lookout for visible cracks, holes, or signs of chewing around:

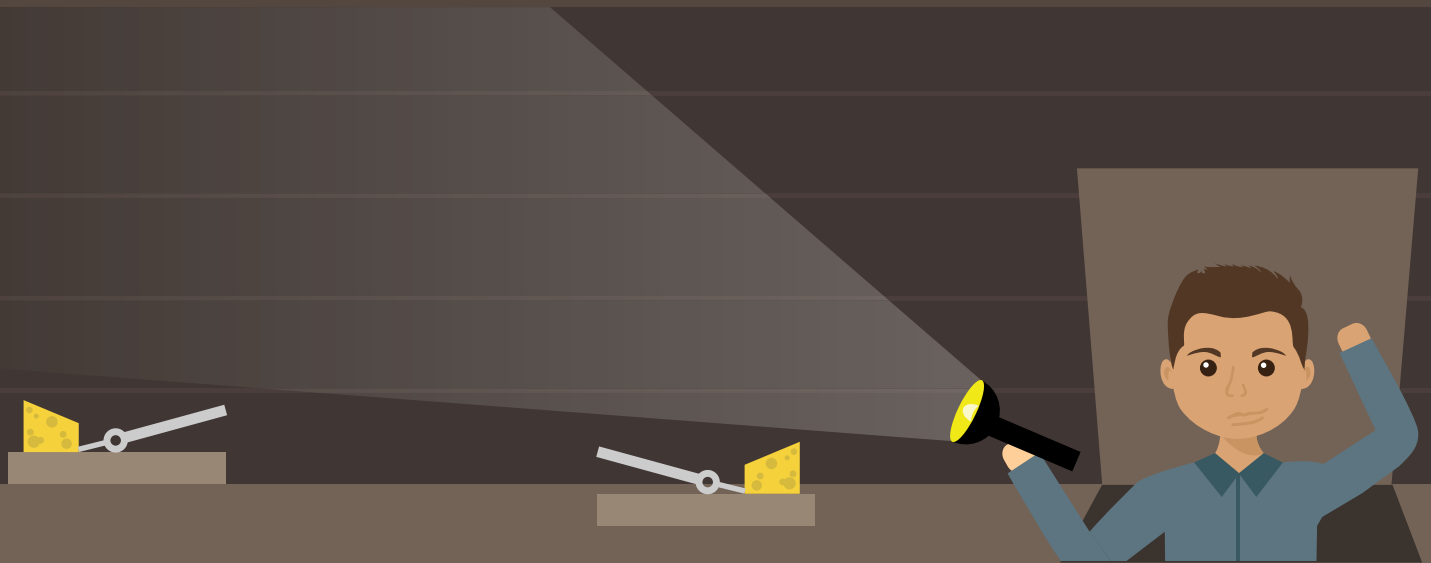
- Walls and exterior siding
- Exterior clutter (woodpiles, tires, etc.)
- Foundations and pillars
- Windows
- The ceiling
- Drainage pipes

If you start finding evidence of rodent infestation in multiple areas around the house, it may be a sign that the infestation has grown severe enough to warrant bringing a professional on board.





# Using Traps on Rodents



## TYPES OF TRAPS

When it comes to rodents in the home, traps are the only viable solution. The most common types of rodent traps include:

### SNAP TRAPS

The traditional mousetrap that snaps shut on a rodent after activation

### CAGE TRAPS

A live-trapping method that captures rodents in a cage to be released elsewhere

### POISON TRAPS

A trap that kills rodents using rat poison

### GLUE TRAPS

A trap that uses glue to ensnare any rodent that comes into contact with it

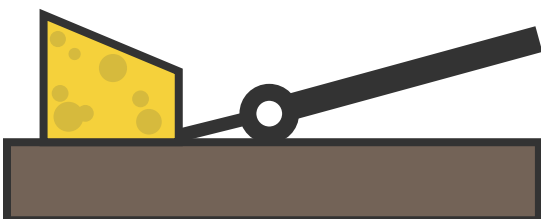
However, while several options are available, snap traps remain the best solution by a fairly wide margin. Poison traps and glue traps are both fairly inhumane, causing the rodent to die a much slower death, and each brings a significant downside.

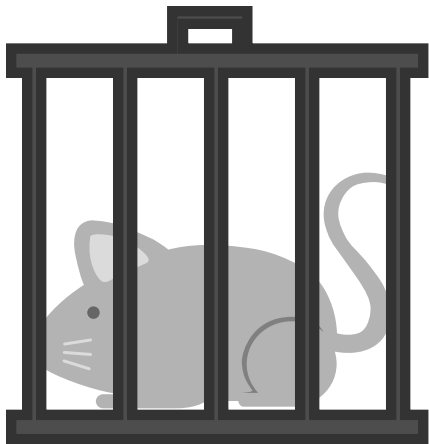
Poison traps can leave you with a home full of dead rodents that search for hidden, out of the way areas to die, making them that much harder to find and remove. Depending on the rodent, the poison may not be strong enough to kill it, leaving you with a rat or mouse that is now even more cautious around any traps it finds.

Likewise, glue traps are often ineffective, and once the rat or mouse has endured the traumatic struggle to free itself from one trap, it will never go near another. And when they work, glue traps are also particularly inhumane, causing the rodent to struggle and die a slow death due to asphyxiation or starvation.

While they are considered the most humane option, even live cage traps aren't usually the best solution for homeowners. Rats and mice had a low rate of survival after relocation, so while cage traps are intended to be more humane, their use can inadvertently leave rodents to slowly die of starvation. Releasing live rodents back into the wild also means you could simply be taking your problem and pushing it onto someone else without solving the root of the issue.

For these reasons, traditional snap traps are still the most effective way to eliminate a rodent infestation in the home fully without causing any unnecessary suffering.





By this point, you have completed a thorough inspection of your home and identified any gaps rats or mice might be using to gain entry, so place traps along the path(s) they use to get in and out of these areas. If you've found any oil smears or tracks, place your snap traps near these areas for the best effect.

Some pest control companies believe in pre-baiting (placing the trap but not activating it so that rodents can become accustomed to it), but this step is often unnecessary. With the right bait in place, rodents will eventually investigate the trap.

In spite of their affinity for cheese in common culture, the best way to bait a mouse or rat is actually peanut butter, so spread on a thick layer after the two days have passed. With the traps set and baited, now all you have to do is wait. Check your traps every morning, remove and dispose of any corpses, and place another nearby, using the same two-day waiting period.

Just remember that trapping alone is generally not enough to fully eliminate a rodent infestation; without sealing off the entry points they used, more rats and mice will just move in and take the place of the old ones. And even if you can successfully kill every rodent in your home and stop them from getting back in, you'll still be left with the task of cleaning up the urine, droppings, and other biohazards that they left behind.

While traps can supplement your efforts, hiring a professional is still the safest and almost always the most cost-effective option for the average homeowner.



## Common Mistakes to Avoid for Homeowners

Part of the reason pest infestations are so difficult to treat for the average homeowner is because there are so many ways things can go wrong. Most homeowners probably aren't used to dealing with rodent infestations and don't know the inadvertent risks they might be taking, so it's important to know what not to do in order to avoid making the situation worse.

Here are five of the biggest mistakes to avoid when dealing with your rat or mice problem:

### USING THE WRONG TRAP

As addressed in the previous section, using the wrong type of trap can be both ineffective and inhumane. Cage, poison, and glue traps each have some benefits, but their weaknesses outweigh their strengths.

For rodents, the only effective and humane trapping solution is the snap trap.

### IMPROPER SEALING

Even after you've killed all the rodents currently inside your home, if you fail to seal the holes they were using, it's only a matter of time before the next group moves in - along with bugs, squirrels, and all manner of other critters.

The only way to keep a home safe from rodents in the long-term is to effectively seal it. Once you're certain all the rodents have been killed and you've removed all the bodies, use a ¼ -inch x ¼ -inch steel mesh to seal any holes you found over the course of your inspection. This should be enough to keep even the smallest rodents from getting inside.

Of course, if you aren't careful, sealing the holes prematurely can lead to...



## TRAPPING RODENTS INSIDE

While getting every hole in your home sealed is paramount, take care not to inadvertently trap rats and mice inside in the process. Otherwise, either the rodents will find (or create) another way out, or you'll find yourself with an attic full of dead rats.

Before you seal off any holes, try performing the "newspaper trick": ball up some newspaper pages and stuff it into the suspected entry point and leave it for two days. If the newspaper is still intact after two days, that probably means that any rodents that might have been using this entrance have left, making it safe to seal. If the newspaper is ripped, pushed to the side, or otherwise tampered with, it's a very good indication that rats or mice are still inside.

## IMPROPER CLEANING

Even if you can successfully kill all the rodents inhabiting your home, the threat won't be truly gone until everything is cleaned. Droppings and corpses left to rot can carry diseases that threaten the people living in your home, and if that wasn't bad enough, the pheromones released in rodent urine trails can attract other rodents.

If you haven't done a thorough cleanup after the problem is eliminated, the job isn't done, and you could be setting yourself up for even more headaches in the future if you don't address the problem promptly.

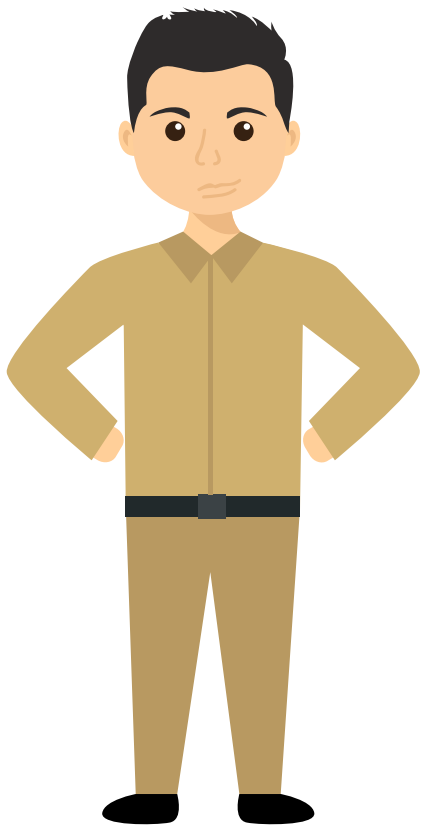
## 4. WAITING TOO LONG

The longer you wait to rodent-proof your home, the higher the likelihood that uninvited guests - be it rats, mice, squirrels, bats, or something else - find their way inside. And once rodents are inside, the longer you wait to get them out, the more damage they will cause.

As the weather cools, the likelihood of rats and mice trying to break in only increases. If you know or even suspect that your home has a rodent problem, **now is the time to act**. But where to begin?

# How to Safely Remove Rats and Mice From Your Attic Every Time

Rats and mice are a considerable hassle for most homeowners. Even after the rodents have all been killed, you still have to deal with:



Removing the corpses

Cleaning up nesting materials, droppings, urine, grease smears, etc

Ensuring all the entry points they used are sealed for good

Repairing the damage, especially to electrical wires/pipes/etc

Replacing ripped insulation

Fumigating the attic to kill any parasites or spores the rodents and their droppings may have been carrying

home protected from future pest infestations

While there are a number of great steps you can take, if you want your rodent problem gone for good, you'll ultimately need to enlist a certified professional pest control specialist for help.

## **A GREAT PEST CONTROL PROFESSIONAL WILL:**

Know all the best strategies for rat and mice eradication

Identify the source of the infestation and locate the entry points rodents are using to get into your home

Use safe and humane practices for rodent removal

Have access to industry-specific and customized equipment that homeowners can't get on their own

Save you from having to buy and set your own traps

Ensure that traps are set correctly and placed in optimal locations throughout the home

Monitor rat and mice presence as well as bait and trap effectiveness to more accurately determine when all rodents have been excluded

Take care of cleanup for droppings, carcasses, and other hazardous materials

Sanitize urine trails and eliminate the pheromones that will attract other rodents

Save you money by getting the job done right the first time and keeping your home protected from future pest infestations



# Are you experiencing a rodent problem, or afraid that your home might be at risk this winter?

**YOUR HOME NEEDS PROTECTION, BUT YOU CAN'T ALWAYS DO IT ON YOUR OWN.**

The team at Breda Pest are insect and wildlife experts with the training, equipment, and knowledge to remove your pest problem and prevent it from ever happening again. We use only eco-friendly methods and can put a stop to your pest problem without causing harm to your home or to the environment.

**HOW BRED A PEST CONTROL REMOVES INVASIVE WILDLIFE FROM YOUR HOME:**

A wildlife control specialist will thoroughly inspect your home for any indicators of pest infestation and assess any damage found

Using the best tools in the industry, your pest control service provider will completely eliminate the infestation and handle all cleaning and sanitation

Your service provider will seal all holes throughout your home and keep pests out in the future

Our team will follow-up with you to ensure that our methods were a success and that your problem has been solved

With the Breda Guarantee, you can rest assured that no matter what your pest chews through, you are always covered

**If you are experiencing a wildlife infestation, or think that you might be, check out how Breda can solve your problem by visiting our wildlife control services page, and take back your home today!**

**REQUEST A CONSULTATION**



## **SOURCES:**

Rats in the Attic

How to Get Rid of Mice in Your Attic & Household

What Is the Most Effective Bait to Use for Mouse Traps?

Rats In The Attic Or Household? How to Get Rid Of Rats!

Do Rats Have a Collapsible Skeleton?

Mice Activity in an Attic

So You've Found Droppings In Your Home - Now It's Time To Find Out Who The Culprit is....

Telltale Signs of a Rodent Infestation - Do You Have Rats or Mice?

Glue Boards: Cheap, Cruel, and Indiscriminate

Attic Restoration: Cleanup of Wildlife Animal Waste and Insulation in Attic