



Public Health

Vector Control Program

Dear Resident:

This letter is in response to concerns we received regarding rodents in your neighborhood. Please make a special effort to look for any signs of rodent activity, particularly near compost piles, and eliminate any rodents from your property. It is important to eliminate rodents because they pollute food, spread disease, and cause property damage (from gnawing). Rodents are most active at night, so if you see any during the day, there is a good chance there are more of them located around your home. Rodents eat all types of food, including human and pet food. While rats and mice are common, they become a potential problem to humans when they are handled directly or if there is an infestation inside the home.

Rodents are carriers of viral, rickettsial, and bacterial diseases, including plague, tularemia, salmonella, rat-bite fever, trichinosis, and hantavirus. These diseases can be spread to humans living in close quarters with rodents.

The best way to control rodent populations is to make the area unattractive to them. Rodents look for three things: food, water, and shelter. Sources of food often include pet food, birdseed, garbage, and compost. Rat habitat must also be controlled in order to avoid repeat infestations. All trash and debris, stacked wood, and household items should be removed and kept at least 1 foot from fences and walls. Trees, bushes, and vines should be trimmed and kept at least 4 feet away from the roof. Heavy vegetation, such as ivy and dense evergreen bushes, should be kept away from buildings and fences and thinned in order to provide light and limited hiding spaces.

Trapping is an effective method of rat control and is the preferred method in homes, garages, and other structures where only a few rats are present. Trapping has several advantages: 1) it does not rely on inherently hazardous poisons; 2) it permits the user to determine if the rat was killed; and 3) it allows for disposal of rat carcasses, thereby eliminating odor problems which may occur when poisoning is done within the buildings.

If rodents are present in the home, the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment (CDPHE) suggests using "snap-traps" that are baited with a peanut butter/oatmeal mix. Trapping success will be increased if food sources have been eliminated and entrances to the building are sealed to keep more mice from moving in. Continue trapping efforts as long as rodent presence is suspected in the home. Use enough traps to make the campaign short and decisive. Leaving traps unset until the bait has been taken at least once reduces the chances of rats becoming trap-shy.

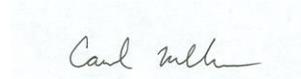


Finally, proper cleanup and disinfection is also important when trapping and removing rodents from the home. NOTE: It is important that you always wear gloves whenever handling rodents or rodent excrement or urine. Below are a few precautions that should be followed:

- 1. Use a solution of household bleach (one cup of bleach per gallon of water) to disinfect rodent carcasses before handling. Spray the rodent and trap, and then allow it to sit for 5-10 minutes. Disinfect your gloves and the trap after you have disposed of the rodent.**
- 2. Air out rodent-infested buildings or areas at least 30 minutes before cleaning. Do not sweep or dry vacuum rodent-contaminated surfaces, which may stir up dust and allow potentially contaminated dust to be inhaled. Spray all contaminated materials with the bleach solution and allow them to soak for 5-10 minutes before cleaning them with a wet mop, sponge, or wet (shop) vacuum.**
- 3. In heavily rodent-infested areas or situations where ventilation and/or wet cleanup cannot be effectively done, use a face mask with a high efficiency particulate air (HEPA) filter.**

Should you have further questions or need additional information, feel free to call me at 303-441-1438.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Carol McInnes", is enclosed in a light blue rectangular box.

Carol McInnes, MPH, REHS