



Rodents Found on the Farm

House Mouse (*Mus musculus*)Black or Roof Rat (*Rattus rattus*)Norway Rat (*Rattus norvegicus*)Meadow Vole (*Microtus pennsylvanicus*)

Rodent pests are a major cause of crop damage in perennial fruit plantings, damaging roots and stems, and undermining the plants with burrowing. In barns and buildings they can ruin feed and chew on electrical wiring. Rodents can potentially spread diseases, including hantavirus.

Recently there have been changes to registered pest control chemicals used to treat infestations of rodents. Not only do rodents cause significant economic damage to crops, but predators that consume rodents, such as owls, are in decline. It is possible that owls and other predators eat carcasses of rodents that have been killed with poison (rodenticides) and thereby ingest the poison in concentrated amounts¹. Whatever the reason, the industry faces change to the registered products, the methods of application, and who can apply them.

Signs of a rodent problem in farm buildings may include droppings, gnawed or chewed areas/holes where the floor meets wall, chew holes in feed bags or visual sighting. These rodents are most active at night and will nest close to a food source such as grain storage areas. In a hay loft, you will often find black rats nesting towards the back of the loft, in between bales of hay or in the wall.

House Mouse (*Mus musculus*)

The House Mouse can be found just about anywhere associated with buildings. The droppings are small, about 3 mm.

Black or Roof Rat (*Rattus rattus*)

The Black (roof) rat is the most common species of rat. They weigh up to 400 g and their body length is up to 21 cm, not including their tail. Their feces are about 1 cm long and have pointed ends. The roof rat is an excellent climber and is often found in attics, but is also common in crawlspaces and exterior areas such as sheds and garages and hay lofts.

Norway Rat (*Rattus norvegicus*)

The Norway rat is most common near water sources (streams, rivers, lakes, ponds, etc.) and is also the largest, weighing up to about 600 g. Their droppings are about 2 cm in length (roughly the size of a jelly bean) with blunt ends. They prefer moist conditions and will often be found in crawlspaces and lower

portions of buildings. They like to burrow and are often found nesting under low lying shrubs, sheds and other protected areas like chicken coops or grain/feed storage areas.

Meadow Vole (*Microtus pennsylvanicus*)

Also known as the Field Mouse, these rodents are 13 to 23 cm in length, have short tails and small furry ears that are all but hidden in its fur. An animal of the field, Meadow Voles are the major rodent pest that cause economic damage to perennial fruit crops.

Controls:

Always start with cultural control methods. Keep feed storage areas clean, fix leaking taps, eliminate standing water, wet areas and possible hiding/nesting areas. Clear around buildings of brush, trees and shrubs to eliminate hiding areas (at least 2 feet). Trim tree branches back 3 feet from roofs to prevent black rats jumping from tree to roof. Learn about the different types of rodents, then monitor to determine when and if you are suffering economic damage.

All weather blocks (AWB) are best used outside around buildings; place packs and pellets are better suited to indoor use. All rodenticides must now be placed out of reach of children, pets and livestock, in secure, tamper-proof and LOCKED bait stations.

In the field, here is the biggest change in regulations: we can no longer use the "T" bait stations made from PVC pipe and staked around the field. Except for Rodent Pellets (zinc phosphide) and Ground Force (chlorophacinone), all outdoor rodenticides must be placed in tamper-proof locked bait stations.

For more information on the rodenticides carried by TerraLink, call the Abbotsford or Delta offices or search for "Rodent Controls" on our website.

References:

¹ Maclure, R. "Highly toxic rat poisons killing owls, other wildlife", updated Dec 21, 2010, http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/40721227/ns/us_news-environment/