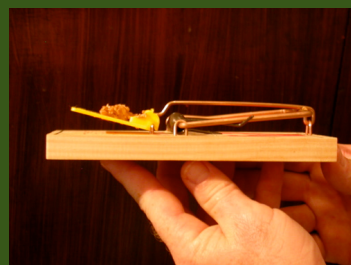
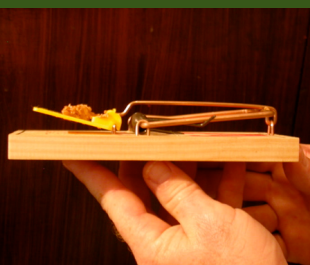
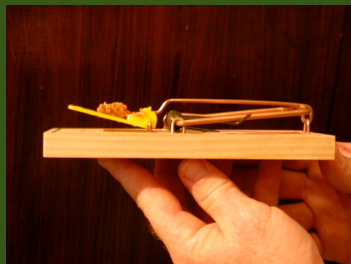


Meeses to Pieces



Another "How To" from the

FRUGAL YANKEE

Getting Cozy for the Coming Winter? You Aren't the Only One!

With the nippy air hitting, Frugal Yankees every where know, the mice are coming!

Yep, those little rodents are looking for a warm place to stay for the winter. They don't have air miles, so traveling to Florida is out of the question. Their pensions never came to fruition, so assisted living is a no-go. This leaves your house as an inviting cozy place to bed down for the winter. There's warmth, food and plenty of crevices to

scurry in and out of and, no one will complain about not being house broken. Get ready, you'll be seeing these furry little sons of Mickey real soon.



The old rule of thumb is, if you

see one, you got a dozen. The thought of a dozen mice crawling around my cabinets and leaving small football shape reminders of their bowel movements is enough to send this Frugal Yankee into a flurry of action.

It isn't just old country homes like mine that get inundated. Mice can be happy in suburban homes, urban homes, just about anywhere. Predators like owls, fox, and hawks have seen their habitat altered and have died off or moved elsewhere. As a result, there are more mice these days.

The solution to your infestation includes two defenses - exclusion and elimination

First, plug them holes. This is exclusion and it's tougher than you think. A mouse can squeeze through a hole 1/4 inch wide; that's pretty darn small. They also can chew through many materials.

That's a tough combination when you're trying to stop something coming into your house, but it can be done. (continued on next page)

MOUSE FACTS

- Mice travel their entire territory daily, checking out each change.
- Mice have poor vision and rely heavily on smell, taste, touch, and hearing.
- Mice use their long sensitive whiskers as tactile sensors enabling them to travel in the dark.
- Mice also have an excellent sense of balance.
- Mice are excellent jumpers, capable of leaping at least 12 inches vertically.
- Mice can jump against a flat vertical surface using it as a spring board to gain additional height.
- Mice can run up almost any vertical surface; wood, brick, weathered sheet metal, cables, etc.
- Mice are nocturnal by nature.
- Mice breed throughout the year and can become pregnant 48 hours after a litter.
- There are usually about 6 mice to a litter and females may produce as many as ten litters/year.
- Mice commonly nest in insulation in attics, also in stoves and under refrigerators.
- Mice do not travel far from their nest, about 12 to 20 feet.
- Mice eat 15 to 20 times per day and will eat anything a human will eat. They prefer cereal.
- Mice have two main feeding periods, at dusk and just before dawn.
- Mice consume 10% to 15% of their body weight every day and need only small amounts of water.



Start with exterior holes. These are places in your foundation with entry points. If you have a stone foundation like I do, get your mortar and trowel. Make a batch up and fill everything you find. If the crack is big, use steel wool as backing. It makes it easier to fill the hole, and mice can't eat through steel wool.

After you're done outside, start crawling around your basement with caulk and more steel wool. Again fill everything in sight.

Ok, exclusion is now complete. It may not be perfect, but over the course of several years, you'll find most of the holes.

Let's be realistic. You missed a hole somewhere. So even though you've slowed them varmints down, you'll probably need to initiate the next step, elimination.

Elimination means either removing them or killing them.

To remove mice without killing them, get a trap made of tough galvanized steel mesh from a hardware stores. Put some food in the trap and place it where you find droppings. These four legged pests come for the food and get trapped. The toughest problem with this method is that you have to remove the trap, take it far away and release the critter.

A few pointers: wear gloves and be cautious. Take your soon to be evicted guests far enough away so they don't return. This should be several mile. However, if you're going this route, be sure you place them where they'll have a reasonable chance of surviving. Why save them if you doom them to starvation or some other form of death?

You will need to repeat this again and again until you are confident all the mice are gone. Personally, this is a bit too P.C. for me. I don't recommend it.

I eliminate them as the Tony Soprano would..

Whack them! We're talking elimination - killing the nasty rodents.

Mice can be killed in many ways. There is the old fashioned snap trap, poison and some new variants of each.

Let's talk poison. Poison is easy, but it comes with downsides. It's easy because you just lay it out where you think the varmints hang out. They like the food, they eat the food, they die. The downside is they may die inside your walls, making for that delightful rotting corpse aroma wafting into your dining room. Or they can stagger out and expire right in front of your television set. If you find a dead mouse and toss into the back yard shrubs, another animal may decide to munch on the cadaver. Then they ingest the poison and expire.

Another problem is that you could poison your own animals or even a rug crawling child who puts everything into his mouth. No, poison has some decidedly tough downsides.

Then there are new fangled 'better mouse traps'.

The use of scents or urine to scare away critters has gained ascendancy. Coyote urine or fox urine are often used. To the best of my knowledge there are iffy at best. You certainly wouldn't use it inside and have your home smelling like a predator's bathroom. When used outside they need constant refreshing. And I'm concerned that spreading coyote urine on the outside of your house is an invite for other coyotes to stop by, not high on my list for welcome guests.

Another new item is the 'sonic' deterrent. These devices send out a high pitched sound that is supposed to drive mice so crazy the leave. Don't waste your money. They don't work and if you believe they do, I have some swamp land I can sell you.

That leaves us with old fashioned snap traps and their kin.

The newest snap traps are easier to use. This is good because I got tired of snapping my fingers.

The trick is locating the mice and then setting enough traps. One way is to place unset traps all over the place, laced with bait and see which ones get nibbles. After a few days, two things happen. First you learn where the mice hang out and second, the mice get used to the traps and food.

Once the prime location(s) have been determined, set 12 or more traps with bait in these areas. Mice move with their whiskers touching the wall, so keep the traps close to the wall.

You should nab at least 10 the first night. Repeat the procedure until they are all gone.

For bait, forget the cheese. Use peanut butter. Better still, put a small pecan sliver in the peanut butter and then add a drop or two of vanilla. That'll work just fine. It's so good, I may eat that myself. Another good bait is greasy glob of bacon. Using this method and this bait, you should nab more than a few.

Once the mice have been killed, use gloves and dispose of them.

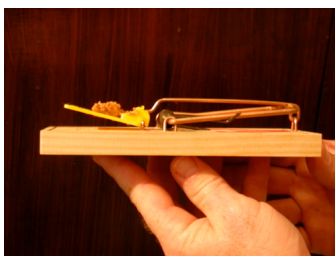
There is another trap I learned of last year. This came from an 80 year old friend way up north in New Hampshire. I used this trap and it was quite effective, although some people will feel a little squeamish.

You take a five gallon plastic bucket. Fill it with about 2 gallons of water. Find a bit of planking and place it like a ramp from the floor to the lip of the bucket. Then smear peanut butter about two inches from the planks end and on the lip of the bucket. Set all of this on a floor with the end of the ramp hitting a wall. The mice scurry along the wall, find the ramp, run up the ramp, smell the peanut butter, try to eat the peanut butter, then slip and fall into the water and drown. I got eighteen mice this way last year. What I like about this method is I can toss the dead mice into the deep woods. Some local animal has a nice mouse dinner, albeit a soggy one.

One penultimate word, mouse infestations are easily handled by most folks, but if you have a major infestation, get a professional.

And the final word, is feline. I just got a new cat. I named him Trapper to make sure he knows his job. I think Trapper is going to have a great time getting rid of mice. He already got one. I am also hopeful that he'll make those pesky chipmunks scarce.

How do you get rid of mice? The Frugal Yankee would love to hear. Send us an email at info@FrugalYankee.com.



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