



## Characteristics of Primary Rodents of the Pacific Northwest

**Norway Rats    Roof Rats    House Mice    Deer Mice**

Rats and mice have been a plague to people forever. They are found everywhere people live and they compete for food and shelter. The loss in destroyed and adulterated food and the spread of disease is staggering. Eliminating and preventing rodents requires some understanding of their characteristics.

**Constant Gnawing:** Being members of the rodent family, rats and mice have front teeth that are constantly growing. This means they must chew frequently in order to keep their teeth worn down. They are capable of gnawing through a variety of materials, including lead sheathing, cinder block, aluminum siding, glass, and improperly cured concrete. Chewing a hole through wood is a snap – and chewing through electrical wires often creates a fire hazard.

**Squeezing, Climbing, Swimming:** Young rats can get through an opening of ½ inch and mice a hole as small as ¼ inch by squeezing their body together. Rodents are excellent climbers and when they can't climb they can jump. Rats can jump up to three vertical feet. They can also drop from heights of 50 feet without injury. They will climb vines, shrubs, trees, wires and vertical pipes up to 4" in diameter to gain access to a building. They can swim up to a half mile in open water, travel through sewer lines against substantial currents, and tread water up to three days. They can emerge from floor drains, water pipes, water traps and toilets.

**Smell:** Odor is one of the most important senses for rodents. They mark objects and pathways with urine and glandular secretions and use their sense of smell to return to these pathways and food sources.

**Taste:** Rodents have a highly developed sense of taste that allows them to detect some chemicals at parts-per-million concentrations. This taste sensitivity gives them an uncanny ability to select exactly the food they want and to avoid foods they don't want.

**Feeding Habits:** Rats are omnivorous; but prefer seeds, fresh vegetables and fruits. Norway rats like food with a high fat content. They will eat anything, however, when they need to, including clothing, leather, bone, and wood. Mice are nibblers and normally feed 15 to 20 times a day. They will eat almost anything humans will eat, but prefer cereal or seed. Rats need lots of water. Mice can live long periods without a direct water supply.

**Nesting:** Rats prefer areas out of sight. Tree rats will often pick attic areas and Norway rats will usually burrow in the ground. They will use any materials, but prefer bits of paper, rags, burlap, or straw. Mice will commonly nest in insulation in attics, in stoves or under refrigerators. Mice will usually stay 10 to 15 feet from their nest. Rats have a much larger range.

**Breeding:** Rats are sexually mature at 2-3 months and average 8-12 young per litter and 4-6 litters per year. Mice breed throughout the year, with about 6 mice to a litter and as many as 10 litters per year. Rats live from 6-12 months in the wild and mice from 15 to 18 months. A few rodents can produce very large numbers if conditions are right.

**Hearing:** Rodents use hearing to locate objects within a few inches. Rats and mice have a hearing frequency of 50 kilohertz or more, which is much higher than humans with a range of about 20 kilohertz. In some situations, such as stress and mating, they make high frequency noises.

**Touch:** Rodents have a highly developed sense of touch due to their very sensitive body hair.

**Vision:** Rodents have very poor vision beyond 3 or 4 feet, but are sensitive to motion up to 50 feet away. They are mostly color blind and sometimes avoid reflective objects. They are most active at night when light levels are low.

**Rodents cause damage and spread disease. They are found virtually everywhere man lives. Call PARATEX for help!**

**1-800-GOT BUGS? (800 542 1234)**

**PARATEX PEST SOLUTIONS**