

# Mouse Control Inside Homes and Apartments: Considerations When Using Traps and Rodenticide Baits<sup>1</sup>

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1. How mice are controlled inside homes and apartments depends on the severity of the infestation as well as the presence or absence of young children and dogs.
2. Both traps and rodent baits (rodenticides) have advantages and drawbacks in both effectiveness and health risks. It is not accurate to assume or state that “traps are always safer than baits”, nor that all rodent bait applications are highly hazardous to building occupants.
3. Similar to *any* chemical or medicines commonly stored inside homes and apartments (e.g., bleach, toilet bowl cleaners, pine sol, a jar of aspirin carelessly left open on a night table or kitchen counter, etc.), poison rodent baits must also be considered potentially hazardous (and possibly lethal) to a toddler if encountered under worst case scenarios.
4. For minor mouse problems (e.g. a couple of mice), several ordinary mouse snap traps are perhaps the most safe and effective. Additionally, if there are any children or pets, traps offer no chance of any child or pet encountering any pesticide bait (no matter how small or minor the amount).
5. If a mouse infestation is more severe than what would be required by using a dozen or so mouse snap traps, or beyond one or two tamper-resistant bait boxes, it is likely a job beyond the Do-it-Yourselfer and a pest professional should be consulted.

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<sup>1</sup> Additional information regarding the safe use of rodent traps and baits is available from a wide variety of sources (e.g., Centers for Disease Control; ([www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov)); University extension offices, Healthy Housing, National Park Service ([www.nps.gov](http://www.nps.gov)) and others.  
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6. Nevertheless and regardless of a pest professional or not, the “golden rule” for mouse traps and/or bait stations, is that they must always be located in areas **out-of-sight** and out-of-reach of any children and pets.

## **Mouse Snap Traps**

- Advantages
- In general, snap traps are more effective and less of a hazard to use than glue traps.
- Snap traps can be re-used after captures (after first spraying with disinfectant)
- Most times (but not always) snap traps provides a quick kill to captured rodents
- Easy to use; low hazard potential
- Snap traps usually (contain) the carcass --reducing the potential for any carcass odor issues (minimal with mice).

### Disadvantages

- Once set, traps need to be checked daily.
- Some people are repulsed by having to check and empty traps.
- Mice that experience near captures (and possible pain) can learn to avoid the traps altogether and rodent baits will then have to be employed.
- Not practical for severe or complicated mouse infestations.
- Successful traps with dead mice, require careful/protected handling and disinfecting of traps, hands and areas.
- Captured---but still alive---mice are occasionally encountered by homeowners. This situation can present a biting risk as well as a humane issue needing to be resolved.

### **Snap Trap locations and number of trap suggestions:**

- Behind and underneath stove (1-2 traps)
- Behind and underneath refrigerator (1-2)
- Under sink (1-2)

- Back/underneath bathroom cabinet (1-2\_
- In cluttered closets (if droppings are present) (1-2)
- Under couches, chairs, etc. (as needed).
- Inserting a mouse snap trap inside an opened paper lunch bag makes for an attractive “mouse restaurant”. And it also helps protect homeowners when collecting the trap Place the baited trap into the back of the bag. Install the trap-bag in inaccessible areas as listed above.
- If traps cannot be installed into inaccessible areas, they can be installed inside boxes (e.g., small cardboard boxes, with holes cut into them) to protect children and pets from setting off the traps and having their fingers or paws pinched.

### **Checking Snap Traps**

Because of possible germs and pathogens from dead mice, residents must be careful in collecting and disposing of dead mice and/or mouse-contaminated traps.

- If traps were inserted into lunch bags, the dead mouse and the trap can be easily collected and thrown in the trash.
- Newspaper, plastic baggies, paper towels etc. can be used to cover over traps to empty or discard of mice and dirty traps.
- When handling rodent traps, or when cleaning up rodent feces always thoroughly wash hands afterwards and clean, disinfect the area from which the mouse was trapped.

### **Using Poison Mouse Baits.**

In general, using mouse baits inside homes and apartments must be approached with caution—especially if there are young children and pets present. If applications are not made with care, children can encounter mouse poisons and require medical intervention regardless of whether or not an actual health-

threatening amount was ingested. Dogs too (particular the small breeds) can be at significant risk should they encounter incorrectly placed mouse baits.

If a mouse infestation therefore, is beyond the use of only one or perhaps two tamper-resistant mouse bait stations containing a secured bait block (usually these blocks contain about one ounce of poison bait), then the job of using poison baits is best left to a pest professional.

Moreover, if a home has toddlers, inquisitive children and small dogs, and the one or two tamper-resistant bait stations cannot be installed into **both out-of-sight/ out-of-reach spots**, then it is suggested to err on the side of maximum caution and use traps instead of poison baits regardless of the use of tamper-resistant bait stations.

*Important Points to Consider.*

- If baits are deemed necessary, it is suggested that only the **bait block formulation** secured inside tamper-resistant mouse bait stations be used.
- **The bait formulations (1) loose pellets and (2) packet style and (3) soft sachets baits should be avoided** (particularly in residences with children and pets) **even when installed inside tamper-resistant bait stations.**

This is because mice often collect and carry these formulations (like they do with seeds) **out of the even the most tamper-resistant stations** and can inadvertently drop or store them in furniture, desks, drawers, kitchen food cabinets and utensil drawers and so on. Obviously, any pellets and packets that have been moved (translocated) by the mice can then be contacted by children and pets and/or they can contaminate areas in which food, food utensils, surfaces, appliances, etc. Mice for example, have moved these types of baits to the inside of stoves, into children's dresser bureaus and a list of other sensitive areas).

- If tamper-resistant mouse bait stations are placed correctly in inaccessible areas, it is

NOT the law that they be secured to the floor or to any other object in these areas and such securement is not suggested.

- Mice are most often active in concealed secretive locations (as listed earlier for trap locations). Therefore, it would be highly unlikely for a need to install bait (or trap) stations in any areas where they would be visible to occupants (and thus necessitating the thought of securing the stations to floors or walls.).
- Baits should be checked and replaced within 7-10 days following the first baiting; and then again 2 weeks later.
- Once the mice have been controlled, monitoring snap traps can then be installed in place of the baits and the traps can be checked on a weekly basis.

### **Additional Cautions**

Mice that have fed on poison baits usually die back in their secreted nests. However, they may also die in unpredictable locations within the dwelling.

- In most cases, there is little odor associated with a mouse or two dying from the use of poison baits (or a delayed reaction to a trap strike) providing the spot in which they are decomposing is not in close proximity to everyday living quarters. This is because in most instances, there is not much body mass to decompose and create foul odors.). Exceptions do occur from time to time however. Any dead mouse odors from a minor mouse infestation typically do not last for more than two or three days.
- Under no circumstances should the poisonous rodent “tracking powders” ever be applied (or “dusted”) into wall voids, cabinet voids, ceiling voids or any other voids of occupied homes and apartments. These powders are highly hazardous and therefore they are classified by the EPA as Restricted Use Pesticides. Mice encountering any of these powders can track the poisonous powders to where ever they travel before they succumb to the toxic effects of the powder (e.g., over floors, cabinets, kitchen appliances, pet food dishes, kitchen plates and stored foods, etc.)

