

## Snap Traps for Controlling Rats and Mice

Trapping is the safest and most effective method for controlling rats and mice in and around homes, garages, and other structures. Rodents that live in close association with humans are called commensal rodents. Rats and mice (Figure 1) are the most frequently encountered commensal rodents in California.

### Selecting the correct trap

Before trapping, make sure you know what rodent pest you have. It is a very common mistake to select the wrong size trap when you have not yet determined whether you have mice or rats (and the correctly identified rat species).

You will not catch a rat with a mouse trap, and you will not catch a mouse with a rat trap. To determine the difference between signs left behind by rats and mice, use the links to the UC IPM *Pest Notes* on rats and mice provided at the end of this article.

Select traps that you can easily set. Older designs of rat and mouse traps can be difficult to operate, so if you are having trouble setting these traps, consider buying a newer design (Figure 2).

### Choose the right attractant

Food attractant is a very important part of successful snap trapping. Select an attractant the rodent would likely find locally available and that you know they are already feeding on. The amount to use is also critical. Select a pea-sized amount of the food attractant and

carefully place it on the trigger or in the trap recess before you set the trap.

Food is not the only thing that can be used to lure rodents to your snap traps. When trapping mice, you can try to use small bits of cotton or dental floss, as the mice will try and collect these for nesting material.

Be cautious about using peanut butter in areas where you are unsure who will access the traps. Many people have peanut allergies.

When using snap traps for rats, it is good practice to prebait your traps. This involves putting the traps in areas where you find rat evidence, including a food or other lure, while leaving them unset for a couple of days until this attractant has been removed multiple times. Because rats are neophobic (afraid of new things), you want to make sure the adults as well as the juveniles become comfortable with the traps. Failure to



Figure 2. A newer rat snap trap design that is easier to set.



Figure 1. Roof rat on a kitchen sink.

prebait may result in the capture of juveniles only. The breeding adults are the most important targets.

### Use multiple traps in the right places

Rodents are very prolific breeders, and there is never just one or two of them; there are many. Therefore, it is important to ensure that you set multiple traps.

Good trap placement is essential. Set traps along a wall or fence line or another linear surface like the edge of a planter to maximize the success of trapping. Be sure to trap with the triggers either facing the linear surface or with the traps along the side of the wall with the triggers facing away from each other (Figure 3). Rats and mice are smart and resourceful animals, so set your traps in

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## Snap traps *...continued from p.1*

ways that take advantage of their biology. While many rats and mice will choose to run along linear surfaces, not all will. It is important to consider this if you are having problems with catching the last few remaining rodents.

### *Be mindful of nontarget wildlife*

Rats and mice might not be the only wildlife roaming around the yard, so be aware of other animals (nontargets) that might get caught in traps. Nontarget wildlife, such as birds, and even larger wildlife, such as raccoons, can fall victim to rodent snap traps. Set traps only during the night, but leave them where they

are during the day, making sure they are not set. This greatly reduces trapping animals that are mostly active during daylight hours. To exclude other larger wildlife, try placing traps under a secured (weighted or staked down) milk crate.

Securing the traps by staking or tying can help somewhat with nontarget issues too. One other benefit of securing your traps is that they will be easy to find when they are triggered. Predators can carry away dead carcasses and often will take traps too if rodents are attached, making it difficult to find traps and use them again.



Figure 3. Effective placement of snap traps for rodents. Top: side-by-side, three in a row with alternating triggers. Bottom: end-to-end.

### *Be safe when disposing of dead rodents*

Successful trapping involves disposing of the carcasses. Always wear gloves when removing rodents from traps or even when working with traps that have come into contact with rodents, dead or alive. Rodents are vectors of many diseases, so even when just moving dead rodents, it is important to protect yourself.

If you catch a rodent, remove the rodent from the trap, double bag it and put it in the trash. Many

municipalities do not allow for the disposal of carcasses in municipal waste so be sure to consult your local ordinances before disposal.

If you don't want to remove the rodent from the trap you can throw both the rodent and the trap away. There are also traps available that catch mice inside the trap and kill them; you then dispose of the whole trap. These types of traps are not available for rats.

### *Don't give up!*

You must persevere with your rodent problem when trapping. It can take a long time to effectively manage a rodent issue in your home or yard. Be persistent. An ongoing trapping program might be necessary in order to keep the rodent problem at the desired threshold. Rats and mice are prolific breeders, so as you trap these rodents out, more may eventually come and take advantage of the resources in your area.

Be sure to check out the Rats and House Mouse *Pest Notes* for tips and information on sanitation, exclusion, and other methods that may help you successfully manage your rodent issues.

—Niamh Quinn, Human-Wildlife Interactions Advisor, UCCE Orange, Los Angeles, and San Diego Counties  
[nmquinn@ucanr.edu](mailto:nmquinn@ucanr.edu)

# Vegetable Pests and Solutions— Training for Nursery Employees

Register now for a hands-on, train-the-trainer workshop for retail nursery and garden center employees, managers, owners, and affiliates. The workshop will help you and your employees gain new skills to better serve customers and keep them coming back!

Topics will include:

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- IPM tools and resources for the public
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Registration fee of \$40 includes a copy of the *Vegetable Pest Identification for Gardens and Small Farm* card set, breakfast, lunch, and training materials.



Attendees at the Sacramento workshop in November 2019.

Interested in attending? Register for one of the following workshops:

**Oakland—January 28, 2020**

CSU East Bay Oakland Center

Register at:

[ucanr.edu/sites/RetailTrainingOAK2020/](http://ucanr.edu/sites/RetailTrainingOAK2020/)

**San Diego—February 12, 2020**

Marina Village Conference Center

Register at:

[ucanr.edu/sites/RetailTrainingSD2020/](http://ucanr.edu/sites/RetailTrainingSD2020/)

# Not a Creature Was Stirring...

This holiday season, the only creatures you want stirring in your home are your family and pets. It's often easier to prevent pests before they become a problem than to try and get rid of them once they infest a home. While some pests can be active year-round, cooler temperatures often trigger some pests to find shelter indoors.

Creatures such as rats or insects are typically looking for food, water, and shelter. Eliminate or reduce access to these resources to deter pests. Retail stores carry a variety of tools that can help block or limit a pest's entrance into the home. As a retail nursery employee, you can help your customers prevent creatures from stirring in their homes this season with the following suggestions.

## Rodents

For rats, mice, and tree squirrels, tight fitting lids on garbage cans and compost containers will keep these rodents from finding a food source near a home and eventually coming indoors. Have your customers examine the exterior of their homes for signs of rat or mice droppings or other evidence, then seal any cracks or gaps larger than ¼ inch. Suggest pruning shears and trimmers to thin vegetation between shrubs and buildings and trim back overhanging trees.

Traps can be placed outside the home to catch rodents before they enter a structure. The correct trap and its proper placement are both very important. See the Snap Trap article on page 1 for more information.

Screen or block potential entrances under eaves or overlapping roof sections to exclude rodents. Sheet metal or ½-inch wire hardware cloth are suitable materials that can keep out rats, mice, and tree squirrels.

## Termites

Your customers can reduce their risk of termite infestation by removing wood piles or scrap wood near structures;



R. MARSH, UCCE

*House mice prefer grains but will consume many different foods.*

repairing any foundation cracks, plumbing leaks, or exterior defects in structural wood; and finishing exterior wood using sealants or paints. Several types of termites exist in California, including subterranean, drywood, and dampwood species. It is important for your customers to identify what type of termite they have before managing. For help, see the *Pest Notes* section on the UC IPM website or suggest they hire a pest control company.

## Cockroaches

Sticky cockroach traps are the best way to monitor for cockroaches. Commercially available open-ended traps are a good option. It's also critical to remove potential food sources by cleaning up any spilled food or dirty dishes and storing food in tightly sealed containers. Other types of sanitation methods can also reduce risk of infestations, including vacuuming cracks and crevices to remove food and debris. Be sure to let your customers know that decreasing clutter, especially in kitchens and bathrooms, will reduce hiding places for



D.H. CHOE, UCR

*Adult female German cockroach carrying an egg case.*



JACK KELLY CLARK, UCIPM

*Adult Indian meal moth. The larvae feed on cereal, flour, rice, dried fruit, nuts, and other stored products.*

cockroaches.

## Pantry Pests

Stored-product pests, also called pantry pests, are typically brought into the home from infested packages. The most common pantry pests are moths and bee-



JACK KELLY CLARK, UCIPM

*Adult red flour beetle.*

les. Pheromone traps are typically available in stores for these moths or beetles, and some traps attract several pest species. These are a great way for your customers to monitor and detect pests. To prevent pantry pests, tell your customers to store food such as flours, grains, and cereals in containers with tight fitting lids and keep them dry. Shelves, bins, and food storage areas should be cleaned regularly.

Several other creatures can also be considered pests during winter months. Spiders (which are also beneficial), fleas, and bed bugs can live comfortably in temperature-controlled indoor environments.

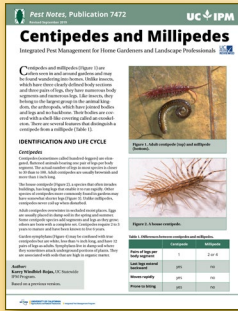
Visit the UC IPM website [ipm.ucanr.edu/PMG/menu.house.html](http://ipm.ucanr.edu/PMG/menu.house.html) for more information about these and other pests.

—Elaine Lander, Urban IPM Educator,  
UC Statewide IPM Program,  
[elande@ucanr.edu](mailto:elande@ucanr.edu)

**WHAT IS IPM?** Integrated Pest Management (IPM) programs focus on long-term prevention of pests or their damage through a combination of techniques including resistant plant varieties, biological control, physical or mechanical control, and modification of gardening and home maintenance practices to reduce conditions favorable for pests. Pesticides are part of IPM programs but are used only when needed. Products are selected and applied in a manner that minimizes risks to human health, beneficial and nontarget organisms, and the environment.

# Recently Revised Pest Notes

## Centipedes and Millipedes

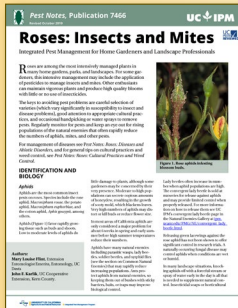


Centipedes and millipedes, sometimes called “hundred leggers” and “thousand leggers,” are commonly spotted in gardens, although the house centipede lives in buildings where it hunts flies, cockroaches, and other pest insects. Despite their alarming appearance, all centipedes are beneficial arthropods, feeding

on insects. Millipedes may occasionally wander into the home but do not survive due to the drier conditions. Learn more about these many-legged arthropods in the most recent version of UCIPM’s *Pest Notes: Centipedes and Millipedes* by UC Cooperative Extension IPM Advisor Karey Windbiel-Rojas, Statewide IPM Program.

Online at [ipm.ucanr.edu/PMG/PESTNOTES/pn7472.html](http://ipm.ucanr.edu/PMG/PESTNOTES/pn7472.html)

## Roses: Insects and Mites



Find solutions for common invertebrate pests on roses in UC IPM’s recently updated *Pest Notes: Roses: Insects and Mites*. This revised publication by rose experts Mary Louise Flint, Extension Entomologist (emerita) and John Karlik, UC Cooperative Extension Advisor, Kern County will help you identify insect pests, select rose varieties, and consider

management options. This *Pest Notes* has been expanded to include color photographs as well as updates on new pests.

Online at [ipm.ucanr.edu/PMG/PESTNOTES/pn7466.html](http://ipm.ucanr.edu/PMG/PESTNOTES/pn7466.html)

## Deer



Many people enjoy seeing deer, but not when they’re ravaging gardens, orchards, and vineyards. To avoid feeding deer your carefully tended plants, you can create deer-resistant landscaping and install fences to exclude them. For details about these management techniques, see the newly updated *Pest Notes: Deer*.

Robert Timm, UC Cooperative Extension Advisor (emeritus) expanded the publication with information about the different deer species and their ranges, details about damage, clarifications on the legalities of deer control, different types of fencing, studies on the use of repellents, and new images.

Online at [ipm.ucanr.edu/PMG/PESTNOTES/pn74117.html](http://ipm.ucanr.edu/PMG/PESTNOTES/pn74117.html)

## Wood Decay Fungi in the Landscape



Trees and other woody plants in the landscape can be decayed and killed by a variety of fungi. Learn about the different kinds of wood decay, how to identify these fungal diseases, and how to manage them in this publication revised by Jim Downer, UC Cooperative Extension Advisor, Ventura County. This version includes color photographs, instructions

on correct pruning to prevent decay, and details about three diseases new to this publication.

Online at [ipm.ucanr.edu/PMG/PESTNOTES/pn74109.html](http://ipm.ucanr.edu/PMG/PESTNOTES/pn74109.html)



## Pests in the Urban Landscape Blog

Our blog provides readers with timely information about pests in and around homes, gardens, landscapes, and structures in California.

Check it out at [ucanr.edu/blogs/ucipmurbanpests](http://ucanr.edu/blogs/ucipmurbanpests)

### University of California Statewide IPM Program

2801 Second Street  
Davis, CA 95618-7774

Editor: K. Windbiel-Rojas

Production: B. Messenger-Sikes

E-mail: [UCIPMretail@ucanr.edu](mailto:UCIPMretail@ucanr.edu)

Online: [ipm.ucanr.edu/RETAIL](http://ipm.ucanr.edu/RETAIL)



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For more information about managing pests, contact your University of California Cooperative Extension office, or visit the UC IPM website at [ipm.ucanr.edu](http://ipm.ucanr.edu).

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