

NEWS COLUMNS

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Rodent Control Tips

Rodent control is an on-going battle for livestock and grain producers, but due to the costs involved, one can't afford to give up. Rats and mice can be rather expensive in terms of feed and grain consumed and wasted, disease carriers and destruction of facilities.

One study conducted found rats and mice eat or destroy over 40 pounds of feed per day. That can add up to over \$1,500 per year.

The cost of disease outbreak though, can be much more devastating. Rats can transmit Bordetella, Lepto, PRV, Salmonella and dysentery. These diseases can cost livestock producers millions annually.

Rodents are also known to destroy building insulation, chew-up wiring and leave holes in buildings and equipment.

Rats and mice are very prolific. A female mouse can have five to ten litters a year with five or six mice per litter. The young are born 19-21 days after mating and reach reproductive maturity in six to ten weeks.

Rodents can be controlled, however. The main areas of rodent control are sanitation, rodent-proof construction and population reduction.

Sanitation involves removing shelter for rodents, especially around grain bins and feed storage areas. Remove old feed sacks and boxes and keep at least a three-foot strip free of weeds around all buildings.

Hay stacks and bales provide a perfect winter home for rodents. Keep hay as far away as possible from livestock facilities and get rid of the old, spoiled hay and straw.

Rodent-proof construction simply consists of designing new barns in the proper manner.

Population reduction involves trapping, poison baits and fumigation. There are a variety of products available so work with the supplier or an exterminator on selecting the right product and using it correctly. A workable plan for your operation may even mean hiring an exterminator. A successful plan will be well worth the time and cost.

SDSU Publication: Best Management Practices for Corn Production in South Dakota

South Dakota State University's comprehensive guide, "Best Management Practices for Corn Production in South Dakota," is new off the press.

A limited number of printed copies are available at no cost from county Extension offices. Or download the entire document or the 16 chapters as individual files from an SDSU Web site, http://plantsci.sdstate.edu/index_files/agbiopubs.htm.

Professor David Clay, research associate Kurtis Reitsma, and professor Sharon Clay edited the publication. Nearly 30 collaborating corn producers, agronomists, and other agricultural professionals wrote and reviewed the manual. It includes information about corn growth and development, hybrid selection, corn planting, seasonal hazards, tillage, crop rotations, and cover crops. Other topics are irrigation, soil fertility, corn insect pests, corn diseases, weeds and herbicide injury, corn harvest, and corn drying and storage. Information on recordkeeping, useful calculations of yields and storage requirements, the corn calendar, troubleshooting, and helpful Web sites rounds out the publication.

The peer-reviewed document includes 66 informational tables and more than 100 color illustrations.

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