

For Immediate Release

August 17, 2020

Wichita Falls-Wichita County Public Health District Rodent Advisory

Wichita Falls, Texas – The Wichita Falls-Wichita County Public Health District has seen an increase in rodent activity complaints. Rats are present throughout the year, but their populations are highest in late summer to early autumn. Since rats are nocturnal, meaning most active between dusk and dawn, they seldom leave their nests during the day. There are several reasons for seeing rats during this time, which can include their nest being disturbed, they are hunting for food, or there is a large infestation.

Worldwide, rats and mice can spread over 35 diseases, by several different routes. These include handling rodents, receiving bites or scratches from rodents, and through contact with rodent feces, urine, or saliva. Humans can also be infected by diseases indirectly from a rat infected with diseases from ticks, mites, flies, or fleas.

In order to prevent the spread of rodents and their diseases follow these three steps:

- **Seal Up** - Seal up gaps and holes around your home.
- **Trap Up** - Trap rodents around your home to help reduce their populations.
- **Clean Up** - Clean your home, yard, and neighborhood to reduce food sources and nesting sites.

The Center of Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) website has detailed information on how to accomplish these three steps: <https://www.cdc.gov/rodents/>. If you have a persistent issue, it may require you to work with a licensed pesticide applicator to implement integrated pest management (IPM) strategies. When cleaning up after a rodent infestation, ensure the area is well ventilated. Stirring up dust by sweeping or vacuuming up droppings, urine, or nesting materials may expose you to disease.

1. To clean:

- a. Wear rubber, latex, or vinyl gloves when cleaning urine and droppings.
- b. Spray the urine and droppings with a disinfectant or a mixture of bleach and water and let soak for five minutes. The recommended concentration of bleach solution is one part bleach to ten parts water. When using a commercial disinfectant, follow the manufacturer's instructions on the label for dilution and disinfection time.
- c. Use a paper towel to pick up the urine and droppings, and dispose of the waste in the garbage.
- d. After the rodent droppings and urine are removed, disinfect items that might have been contaminated by rodents or their urine and droppings.

2. Disinfect the area:

- a. Mop floors and clean countertops with disinfectant or bleach solution.
- b. Steam clean or shampoo upholstered furniture and carpets with evidence of rodent exposure.
- c. Wash any bedding and clothing with laundry detergent in hot water if exposed to rodent urine or droppings.

3. Lastly, remove gloves and thoroughly wash hands with soap and water.

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