



Health, Housing &
Community Services Department
Environmental Health Division

Tips to Control Rodents around Chicken Coops

A common misconception about chickens is that they attract rodents, but the truth is that rodents are attracted to their food and water, not chickens. Rodents are a nuisance and a hazard for backyard chickens and controlling them requires a multi-faceted approach.

Problems Rodents Cause:

- they eat chicken feed
- they eat eggs and baby chicks
- they contaminate feed, water and coops with droppings, urine and hair
- they are carriers of lice, fleas and mites and other parasites
- they can transmit diseases
- they can damage yards by burrowing and can gnaw holes through coops.
- they can injure chickens
- they can cause stress in chickens which can result in reduced egg production



Control Strategies

Eliminate Food Sources

- Remove or securely cover feeders at night.
- Modify feeders to prevent beaking out of feed. Adding dividers or chicken wire to the base of the feeder can accomplish this objective.

- Clean up spilled feed. If chickens beak-out food onto the floor from the feeder, clean it up before nightfall when rodents are active. Purchase feed pellets instead of crumbles as they are more difficult to beak-out and easier to clean up than crumbles.



- Use a treadle-style feeder, which requires the chicken's weight standing on a pedal to open it.
- Never leave eggs in the coop overnight. Eggs left in nest boxes are a dinner invitation for rats.
- Store feed in a galvanized container with a lid securely in place. Rats can chew through feed bags, plastic bins and wood as easily as opening a bag of potato chips.

Store feed away from the coop if possible.

Eliminate Water Sources

Remove traditional waterers at night or, better yet, switch to poultry nipple waterers and keep the chickens' water supply disease-free.



Secure the Coop & Run

- Install hardware cloth all around the coop and run to prevent access by predators and pests.
- Cover gaps or openings with hardware cloth (1/4-inch mesh).



- Bury hardware cloth 12" (inch) into the ground all the way around the coop and run to deter burrowing from underneath.

Use Repellent

- Bobcat urine - Research has proven that rodents instinctively recognize the danger associated with the scent of bobcat urine and avoid the area. Strategic distribution of bobcat urine will result in rodents seeking food elsewhere.
- Essential oils - Some essential oils as balsam fir or peppermint in very high concentrations may repel some rodents as the strong scent interferes with their ability to smell danger. However, a very determined rodent will not be deterred by peppermint oils alone. Essential oils used in high concentrations can be toxic to chickens if ingested. Take precautions when applying essential oils.

Use Eliminators

- Clearly, poisons and most rat traps are far too dangerous to use around chickens, but rodents can be eliminated naturally by employing a good barn cat around the coop and run.
- An electric shock device, can be safe to use around chickens, yet deadly to rodents.
- Tamper-resistant bait stations typically made of metal or hard plastic, intended to prevent children and non-target animals are likewise recommended. They must be lockable and secured to the ground, a fence or a structure. Cable ties can be used, especially for attachment to fence lines. Stations also can be fastened to the ground with stakes, or attached to patio blocks by bolting or gluing. The use of patio blocks is advantageous in elevating stations above ground level moisture problems. The stations also must lock, usually by built-in lock and key mechanisms, and the bait blocks inside should be secured with wire or skewered on metal rods designed for that purpose.



Contact a Professional

If the problem continues with little or no improvement even after you've followed through with suggestions contained within this handout, consulting with a pest control professional is highly advised. An experienced pest control professional well equipped with tools, implements, and experience could may well fix the problem for you.