

DEER MOUSE IDENTIFICATION

Peromyscus maniculatus

**DEER MICE ARE THE ONLY
KNOWN CARRIERS OF
HANTAVIRUS IN
OKANOGAN COUNTY**



**LIGHT TO REDDISH BROWN
FUR ON BACK AND HEAD**

PURE WHITE UNDERBELLY

WHITE FEET

**BI-COLORED TAIL (BROWN
ABOVE, WHITE BELOW)**

**LARGER EARS AND EYES
THAN A HOUSE MOUSE**



Deer mice prefer outdoor habitats, although they will move indoors if human presence is limited or infrequent. They are found in a wide variety of habitats throughout Washington State, including Okanogan County.

These nocturnal rodents do not burrow into the earth, but instead build nests of grass in tree cavities, under fallen logs, or even in vacant burrows from other animals. In winter, their metabolism drops in order to conserve energy.

Deer mice make up a large portion of the diet for bird and mammal predators. When predators are absent, they can become a pest. The females can breed 3-4 times per year, with litters of 3-6 young. Their gestation period is from 22 to 25 days. As a result, their numbers can increase quickly without predation.



As the only known carrier of hantavirus in the northwest U.S., deer mice should be eliminated from human habitations. While hantavirus does not cause illness in mice, it can cause a serious and often fatal respiratory illness in humans. Thirty-two cases of

hantavirus have been confirmed in Washington State since 1993, eleven of which have been fatal.

Hantavirus is generally present in 5 to 30% of all deer mouse populations, and is spread in their urine, saliva, droppings, and nests. A person can be exposed to the virus by touching any of these and then ingesting virus-laden dust or dirt. Disturbing a nest or droppings can create dust, spreading the virus through the air.

To keep rodents away:

- ❖ Plug or screen any openings into your house that are larger than 1/4 inch.
- ❖ Use spring-loaded traps or poison bait.
- ❖ Store pet food and grain in containers with tight covers.
- ❖ Keep tight lids on indoor trash cans that contain food or kitchen wastes.

- ❖ Remove debris, junk piles, and old cars within 100 feet of the house.
- ❖ Tightly cover outdoor garbage cans and raise them 12 inches off the bare ground.
- ❖ Stack firewood, lumber, hay, or other similar materials as far from the house as possible.

When cleaning areas that have been inhabited by mice, you should assume that deer mice have been present. Observe the following:

- ❖ Wear rubber or latex gloves and a mask to prevent contact.
- ❖ Mix a solution of 1 cup bleach to 10 cups of water, and use to thoroughly soak dead mice, droppings, nests, or areas to be cleaned before disturbing them.
- ❖ Air out structures that have been closed up for at least one hour prior to cleaning.
- ❖ Dispose of all contaminated items in sealable plastic bags in an outdoor trash can.

- ❖ Wash clothes and bedding in hot water and detergent, and dry with high heat.
- ❖ Carpets and upholstery should be steam cleaned.

Key features of other local rodents:



House Mouse – all brown color



Woodrat (packrat) – bushy tail



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