

Mr 'Mice' Guy says be on the lookout for mice activity

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The first half of 2021 has seen mice plagues throughout the grain growing regions and caused the Wellington Correctional Centre in Western New South Wales to be evacuated due to mice damage. Will the current winter be cold and dry enough to kill the majority of the population to prevent an early spring outbreak?



Mr Mice Guy, Steve Henry from CSIRO

Photo credit: Peter Brown, CSIRO

Steve Henry, aka Mr 'Mice' Guy, is a scientist at CSIRO who has been studying mice within the grains sector for over 10 years. Here he provides some insight into the characteristics of this pest and some simple management methods the berry industry can consider.

Why are mice a perfect pest?

Mice are breeding machines which allows the population to increase quickly when conditions are favourable. A mouse can start breeding from 6 weeks of age and continue to produce a litter every 3 weeks; they are effectively in constant pup production.

Over winter survival is important. Wetter winters, milder temperatures, or adequate shelter to reduce exposure to cold weather coupled with a good food supply create perfect conditions for mice to survive over winter. If mice manage to survive the colder months through suitable shelter and food supply, they are quickly able to take advantage of the warmer days and increased food supply in the spring allowing populations to rapidly boom into plague proportions.

What should berry growers be doing?

Be on the lookout for mice activity regularly, even in your off season as keeping on top of populations is really important. Look for signs of mice activity in and around the paddocks and farm infrastructure. Check to see if there are active burrows or damage to plants and fruit.

Around handling sheds and farm infrastructure try to create unfavourable conditions for the mice by keeping the areas both clean and free from clutter, plus slash and maintain grass around the property to reduce spots where they can live, hide and feed. Ensure all potential food sources and waste fruit are disposed of and not left accessible. Being tidy is unfriendly for mice.

The **Mouse Alert App** was developed to help get data on mice populations. When neighbours and communities all use the App you can get regional insights for populations and management needs. Another monitoring idea includes placing a fine powder of some kind around potential burrows and check in the morning to see if activity is present.



The Mouse Alert App is part of the FeralScan Pest Mapping program.

MouseAlert is a free resource that farmers can use to record and report the prevalence of mice before they become a major issue. **MouseAlert** can help you to notify producers in your region about changes in mouse activity. Information you enter, can be used to alert local biosecurity authorities and other people about changes in mouse populations, which can help everyone reduce the problems they cause.

www.feralscan.org.au/mousealert

The Mouse Alert App can be downloaded on the Apple App Store or from Google Play.

Photo credit: CSIRO

KEY THINGS TO DO:

- Monitor for rodent activity regularly, not just in the peak of your season
- Minimise sources of food (good weed and grass control, dispose of waste crop, keep farm and sheds tidy)
- Minimise sources of shelter (control weeds, grass around farm, fence lines adjacent to crops)
- Actively manage populations (bait or trap) using only registered products and always follow label directions
- Secure baits appropriately and dispose of any carcasses



For more information & additional resources, please visit:

PestSmart provides best practice information on how to plan, manage and improve pest animal control programs in Australia.

www.pestsmart.org.au

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