Rodents are nearly cosmopolitan gnawing mammals, capable of occupying a wide range of diverse ecological settings. According to Orkin pest control, the District of Colombia ranked third among US cities with the highest rodent infestations (Bowerman, 2018)\(^1\). Rats and mice prefer to live in close association with humans who provide a continuous source of food, water, shelter, and breeding sites. The Norway rat, roof rat, and house mouse are the most common domestic invaders dominating District of Colombia’s rodent population. If populations are left unmanaged, rodents may transmit diseases, trigger electrical fires and cause structural damages. Rodents in the Washington, DC, and the surrounding area can be carriers for Hantavirus, Leptospirosis, Lymphocytic Chorio-meningitis, Rat Bite Fever and Salmonellosis (BUGOUT, 2016)\(^2\).

**RODENT-PROOFING AND SANITATION ARE THE MOST EFFECTIVE RODENT PREVENTION METHODS.**

Rodent-proofing involves the use of galvanized metal, cement mortar, concrete or brick to seal likely points of entry. A house mouse can easily squeeze through an opening larger than ¼” meanwhile, a rat needs ½” or more to gain access to a building or food supply. Sanitation directly reduces the growth of rodent populations by removing potential sources of food, water, and harborage. Furthermore, eliminating food sources increases the odds that rodents will feed on poisoned bait stations rather than human food.

**CONDUCTING RODENT INSPECTIONS**

To conduct a thorough inspection you will need:

- Flashlight
- Knee pads
- Protective gloves and a respirator.
- Black-light (for detecting rodent urine)

**SIGNS OF RODENT ACTIVITY**

Rodents are nocturnal and are rarely seen during daylight hours. During a structural inspection, signs of rodent activity include:

- Runway and rub marks
- Squeaking, scratching and movement in walls, ceilings or under floors
- Gnaw marks
- Debris (ex. nut shells) and signs that food has been eaten
- Droppings (twelve to eighteen mm long)
MANAGING RODENTS

From rodent signs, one can determine the species and size of the infestation. Once rodent activity is confirmed, tracking powder, traps, and poisons baits may be used to locate and manage rodents. It is important not to disturb nor alter rodent-infested areas during treatment. Rodents have keenly developed sensory abilities (smell, touch, and taste), small environmental disturbances are easily detected and can alter the effectiveness of management strategies.

TRACKING, TRAPPING, AND BAITING

Tracking powder can be sprinkled onto high rodent traffic areas (like burrows, cracks, holes, and runways) to expose rodents to toxicants when they groom. Tracking powders can end up anywhere the rodent carries them, consequently, they are not recommended for sensitive areas (daycares, hospitals or where they could contaminate food or surfaces that come in contact with food). Snap traps, sticky traps, and automatic traps are more suitable for sensitive areas. Traps are non-toxic, provide quick results and are easily disposed of. Rodenticides are commonly referred to as baits. Proper placement is the most important consideration when using traps and baits for rodent control. Space bait stations 15 to 50 feet apart for low-moderate infestation and closer when the infestation is heavy. Anticoagulants and non-anticoagulants are the two major types of rodenticides. Anticoagulants are less toxic than non-anticoagulants, but both damage blood vessels by inhibiting blood-clotting apparatuses. Keep in mind that rats travel further than mice. If rodent-proofing, sanitation, tracking, trapping and baiting fail to control rodent infestation, contact your local licensed rodent control specialists.

RESOURCES
