

How to Catch a Furry Friend

Guidance written by Humane Wildlife Solutions & Flo Blackburn

Follow the advice below for the best chance of catching mice or rats in your home or business.

It is recommended that you have your property proofed by ourselves, or by doing so yourself, before setting traps, as not doing so will likely lead to more rodents getting in. Trapping is best employed when proofing has been done and a rodent is found to still be trapped inside, which occurs in around 10% of the jobs that we do.



Which Trap To Use?

We recommend the following traps for mice and rats:

For mice: Songwin Humane Mouse Trap

For rats: The Big Cheese Ultra Power Live Multi-Catch Rat Trap

If you wish to use another trap, feel free to contact us about which trap you plan to use and we can discuss its suitability for the species and situation.

Before Setting The Trap

While it may be tempting to set the trap right away, there are a few things to consider to improve the likelihood of success:

- Confirm whether it is a rat or mouse that is visiting your house so that you can set the correct trap. This is also important because in the very unlikely event that you have a visiting shrew, these animals must not go more than three hours without food, and so to trap them is not recommended. We can help you to identify which species you are dealing with.
- If you know what the mouse/rat is accessing the property to eat, put some of this food in an area where you know they go, preferably somewhere hidden, like underneath a kitchen counter. Do not clean the area at all before doing this. If you don't know what they're feeding on, use peanut butter or a hazelnut spread (eg Vego or Nutella). You want them to feel that nothing has changed about their environment, except that the food that has drawn them in, or the spread, is readily available in a place that they feel safe.
- Traps are more successful when placed on an exact route that a mouse or rat frequently takes, and is especially effective if placed against a wall or in a corner, as this is where mice and rats feel least vulnerable and 'in the open'.
- After a night of this, if the mouse/rat has fed on some or all of the food, the trap can then be added exactly where the food was put. If they don't eat the food on the first

night, it is best to leave it a few nights until they have started to feed on the food. This step can be skipped if you want to save time, but may result in it taking longer for the rodent(s) to be caught.

- The trap will be a new addition to the environment, so the less scary it seems the better. Therefore, try to avoid getting your scent on the trap. This can be aided by handling it with gloves whenever handling the trap, which will help with hygiene as well, and handling or moving it as little as possible.
- If you are trying to trap a rat, using the bedding from a domestic rat is another way of encouraging a rat to enter the trap.
- When putting the trap down, put any leftover food from the previous night(s) inside the trap. Crumbs can be left on the floor under the trap. The idea is to change as little about the environment and its smells as possible, so that the only new addition is the trap itself. If little food remains, more of the same food can be added.
- It is a good idea, then, to leave the trap unset and open for a night or two, allowing the rodents to go in and out. This will make them comfortable around the trap.
- Plan a suitable release site that does not take long to get to so that you know exactly what to do once a rodent is caught. It is important to select a site which will provide a mouse or rat with everything they need, and make it unlikely that they will go to another household. We can advise on where is best.

Trapping

It is possible to catch rodents without following the steps above, but the success rate tends to be much lower. Set the trap, preferably after carrying out the above steps. If having done the above, keep it in the exact same place with the exact same food. Ideally, don't move it from where it was when unset at all - just set it.

Be sure to check the trap as often as possible, and no less than twice a day. While live trapping is a humane alternative to lethal traps, it is also a last resort and is stressful to the animal in question.

If you will be unable to release any caught rodents for a while, eg if you are going away for a while or will be unable to go out, unset the trap but keep it where it is to allow the rodent(s) to keep using it until it is time to set it again.

Remember, removing rodents – especially rats – is a process and can take time. Contact us if you need further advice.

You've Caught a Rodent! Now What?

When picking up the trap, be very quiet. Cover the trap with an old blanket to keep the rodent(s) in the dark, as this reduces stress. If using the rat trap, make sure you only carry the trap using the handle so that you do not get bitten.

Immediately look at the animal from below. It should be obvious if a mouse or rat is lactating as there will be visible teats. If they are, it is best to release the rodent back

where it was caught. It sounds counter-productive, but taking the rodent away will lead to their young to starve in your property. While it is harder to catch a mouse or rat a second time, it can be done.

Assuming they are not feeding young, take the rodent(s) to the previously-decided release site as soon as possible (see 'Rodent Release Sites' below). If it is late evening, the animal can be left overnight where it was caught if necessary, but it is better to release them as soon as possible, especially if there are two or more rodents in the same trap.

Make sure you stay quiet for the duration of the journey with the rodent(s), and take care when handling the trap.

Release the rodent(s) at the release site in a covered area, such as under a hedge, so that they are hidden. Ensure, before releasing, that there are no cats nearby and that you are away from any roads.

When you return home, return the trap to exactly where it was without cleaning it, add the same type of food as it had previously, and set it. Even if you think there was only one rodent, keep doing this until no more rodents are caught, as there may be more than you think. If you have a week with no activity then the trap can be removed.

Rodent Release Sites



We are happy to help you find a suitable rodent release site and can do this remotely. As with any animal, their survival is greatly impacted if they are released somewhere unsuitable. Not only do they need released somewhere with food and shelter, they need to go somewhere where they will be unlikely to end up in someone else's property.

Rats and mice both require a release site which will give them natural food, like fruits and insects, harbourage under which to hide without fear of predation, and a water source. Wooded areas, overgrown areas near ponds or canals, and wasteland often provide this, as long as they are not areas which are likely to be developed on any time soon or are right beside a building or road.

Mice tend to only travel up to ten metres between their home and their food source, whereas for rats this is closer to thirty metres. Therefore, mice can survive in a smaller area than rats.

Ensure that where they are released is not somewhere that you know to be a common hunting ground for cats.

Ensure that there are no signs of traps or bait boxes in the area.

If your house is proofed, we usually recommend releasing mice just outside your house. This is because they will already have been in the garden before entering your home so are likely to know the area, and if your house is fully proofed then they won't get back in. Moving them away is likely to result in another lot of mice moving into your garden anyway.

If you think your garden is unsafe to mice, however, because you deem it to lack natural food sources, or it is frequented by cats, we advise that you release them elsewhere.

Aftermath

While hygienic to do so, a trap will be more successful if it smells of mice or rats (depending on which it is to be used for). Therefore, if the trap needs cleaned after use, it is better to give it a quick clean with neutral-smelling soap, rather than a deep clean.

Other Important Information

It is important to be aware of the fact that, unless proofing of the property's interior has been done, there is a likely chance that more rodents will return in future. This is the case when using kill traps or poisons as well. Therefore, if not already done, we advise that you speak to us about proofing your property yourself, or allow us to proof your property for you.