

Maintain Your Way to a Rodent-Free Facility

BY ZIA SIDDIQI

Five simple tips to keep rats and mice out of your hair.

Along with cooler temperatures, fall and winter often bring another quiet threat to food safety: rodents. These much-maligned pests chew through cardboard boxes, wood, plaster and even electrical wiring, and some can jump as high as one foot from a flat surface. Known to carry more than 40 diseases, including trichinosis and Lyme disease, rodents and their droppings shouldn't be anywhere near food. For this reason, the American Institute of Baking



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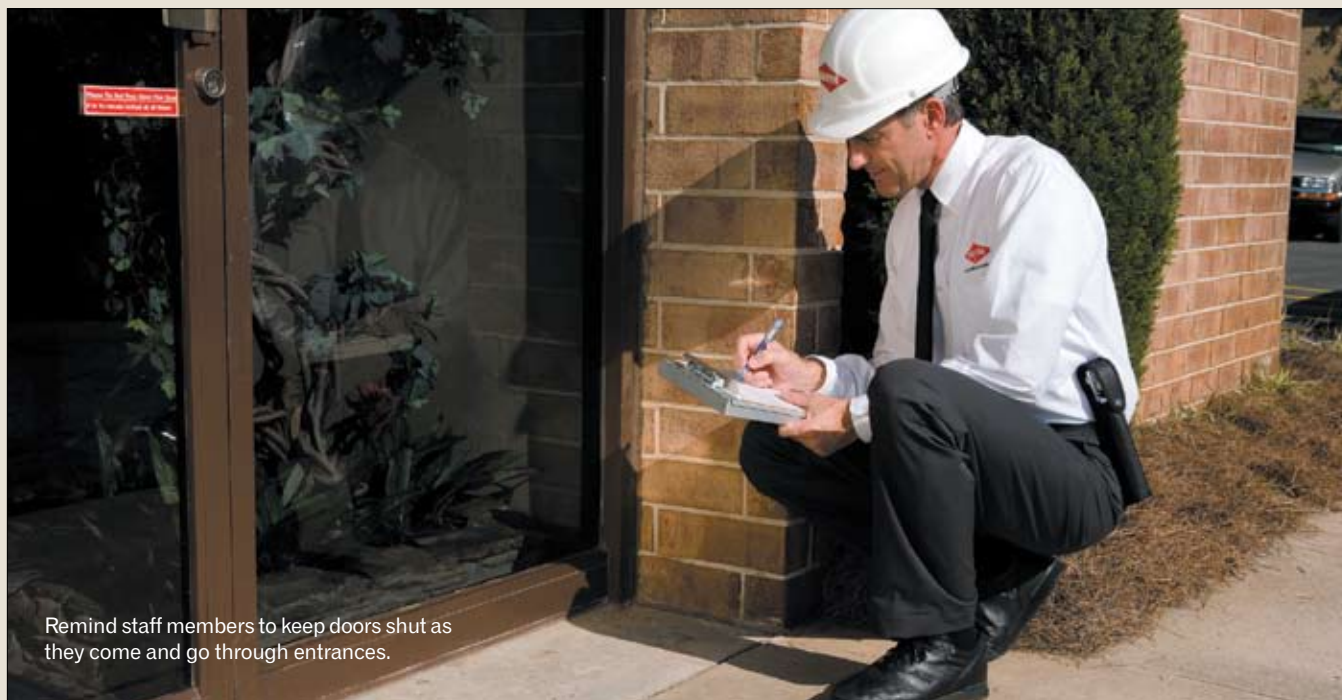
(AIB) and other food safety auditors require food production facilities to follow multiple tactics to keep rats and mice out.

Commercial facilities are particularly vulnerable to rodents during the colder months as these warm-blooded pests migrate from their outside habitats to find warm shelter. Even if their stay is short, a couple

of rodents can multiply into an infestation of hundreds. Since rodents tend to avoid areas of high human activity and prefer to hide in undisturbed parts of a building, such as storage areas and under baseboards, consult a pest management professional to target rodent "hot spots" and implement facility maintenance techniques that directly target the pests.

CLOSE THE DOOR ON RODENTS. Take quick and easy steps to prevent rodents from accessing a facility through windows and doors. Make sure all windows shut completely and remind staff members to keep doors shut as they are coming and going through storage area entrances. Install door sweeps and weather stripping to block entry around all sides of doors.

ELIMINATE DISCREET ACCESS POINTS. Rodents don't limit themselves to doors. They have been known to gain access through



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RODENT CONTROL

screen vents and openings to chimneys. They can enter through tiny openings in the exterior of a facility and may even gnaw their way in through tiny cracks and crevices. In fact, some mice can fit through holes as small as a dime.

Seal any unnecessary openings with a weather-resistant sealant and ask your pest management professional to incorporate copper mesh or steel wool into the sealant to prevent rodents from biting their way through. Close off entrances in loading docks when they are not in use, and use bait stations around doors that must remain open. Don't forget to block off areas where utilities and pipes enter the facility.



Dr. Zia Siddiqi

STAY DRY. Practicing good sanitation is another way to maintain your facility and prevent pests. Rodents are especially attracted to water sources and other places prone to moisture, so keep basements, attics and crawlspaces well ventilated and dry. Store

all soggy garbage in sealed containers and dispose of it regularly. If possible, close off trash storage areas from the rest of the building. It's best to store boxes, paper supplies and other materials in areas separate from where food or trash is stored. When stored together, these materials put food and shelter together, attracting rodents.

CREATE AN EXTERIOR BARRIER. To prevent rodents from burrowing their way into your facility, maintain a two-foot gravel strip of quarter-inch pebbles around the building. These rocky strips can discourage rodents, which do not like being out in the open, from accessing your facility. Lay a three-inch barrier of sand underneath slab construction to provide another obstacle to pests trying to penetrate cracks in slab construction. In addition, cut back all vegetation at least two feet from the façade to avoid providing rodents shelter right next to your facility.

KEEP A LOOKOUT. Schedule regular meetings to review your facility maintenance schedule and consider how it might improve the overall pest control program. Regularly inspect your property in-between visits and keep up with maintenance repairs year-



Call a pest management professional immediately if you notice a pest infestation.

round. If you find evidence of a rodent infestation, such as droppings, rub marks on walls or chewed wires, call a pest management professional immediately. These simple measures can help prevent a major problem before it starts and ensure that you maintain a reputation for quality. **QA**

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