

Controlling Mice, Rats and Bats in Your Home

From South Dakota's biggest cities to the most remote homestead, people face home intruders. Mice, rats and bats are found across the state. They carry diseases, including rabies or hantavirus, that are dangerous to humans. They also carry fleas and lice that may spread other diseases to people or pets.

You might be able to avoid them in the great outdoors, but you need to be proactive if they try to move into your home. Both the [South Dakota Department of Health](#) (SD DOH) and the [Center for Disease Control](#) (CDC) have information to help.

Preventing Mice and Rat Problems Outdoors

Rodents are attracted to food, water and safe places to build a nest. The CDC recommends that people

- Clean up garbage around their house, use a garbage can with no holes and a tight lid, and keep outside grills or cooking areas clean.
- Keep composting bins and woodpiles at least 100 feet from your home.
- Mow yards, trim brush and weeds around the house.

Bats prefer to live in the wild where there is less human disturbance. According to the [City of Sioux Falls Animal Control](#), if a bat is in your house, it either lost its way or it is a bat that enjoys the comforts of your warm home. That doesn't mean you need to keep the uninvited houseguest!

Checking for Rodents Indoors

People may see signs of mice or rats long before – or instead of – spotting a live one in their home. It is easier to control them early, not after they have created a safe nest and perhaps started giving birth to a new generation. Check your home or outbuildings regularly for:

- Rodent droppings: Commonly found in cabinets, drawers and other areas out of plain sight.
- Gnaw Marks: Mice and rats chew drywall, wood and most anything else to keep their teeth at the proper length and to create better access points to hiding or nesting spots.

It's important to clean up all droppings, dead rodents and nesting materials safely. The CDC has an easy guideline to follow to complete the task without risking your health. [Click here](#) for their information.

How to Remove Rodents or Bats

If you see evidence of mice or rats, set out traps and keep these pointers in mind:

- Place traps in areas you have seen rodents and in places they are likely to go.
- Keep baits and traps out of reach of children and pets.
- Always follow instructions for traps.

If you have bats in your home, it is important to remember to not touch them with your bare hands. Bat bites and scratches are small and easy to overlook. If you do know that you were

bitten or scratched by a bat, wash the wound with soap and water and get medical help right away.

The CDC offers these tips on how to safely capture a bat:

1. Find a container like a box or jar large enough for the bat to fit in.
2. Locate a piece of cardboard large enough to cover the container opening.
3. Punch small air holes in the cardboard.
4. Put on leather work gloves.
5. When the bat lands, approach it slowly and put the container over it.
6. Slide the cardboard under the container to trap the bat inside.
7. Tape the cardboard to the container to secure the bat inside.
8. Contact your local health department to find out if they need to test the bat for rabies and determine if you need medical care from being in contact with it.

Some animal control agencies will help remove bats from your main living areas. You may have to contact a pest control company if the bats are in your attic.

Finding and Sealing Access Points

You might feel like a detective when you search for the spot where a mouse, rat or bat got into your home. Be patient and don't give up! You'll be looking for gaps or holes as small as ¼ inch.

The most important points to remember are:

- Look for gaps and holes in and around your home
- Caulk or seal any openings larger than a dime
- Use screens, chimney caps and draft guards to seal attic doors
- Fill electrical and plumbing holes with steel wool or caulk
- Make sure food and garbage inside are sealed up tight
- Make sure all doors to the outside close tightly
- Keep outdoor areas clean and food sources away from the home

There are dozens of places to check. The CDC has a comprehensive list to guide you, along with details on how to seal the most common spots. Please click [here for a list](#).

For more information, call 211 or search our online database:

- www.helplinecenter.org/2-1-1
 - Enter your zip code
 - Select categories:
 - Government
 - City Departments/Offices
 - County Departments/Offices

Sources:

- Centers for Disease Control <https://www.cdc.gov>
- City of Sioux Falls Health and Safety <https://www.siouxfalls.gov/health-safety>
- South Dakota Department of Health <https://doh.sd.gov>

Disclaimer: This HelpSheet is developed by the Helpline Center for informational purposes only. HelpSheets provide a brief overview of the designated topic. For more information, call 211 or text your zip code to 898211.

Updated: May 2026