

Diggin' in the Dirt: A Mouse in the House

By Chip Bubl
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Homesteading in Vernonia

Homesteading in Vernonia will be held at the Vernonia Public Library on Wednesday, May 24 at 6:30 pm. The class will describe the variety of plants, animals, waterfowl, game birds, and fish that can be grown and/or harvested within Columbia County. There will also be a follow-up discussion on raising meat on your property within the city limits or outside of them. The presenter is Chip Bubl, OSU Extension agent. The program is free and open to the public.

A mouse (or more) in the house

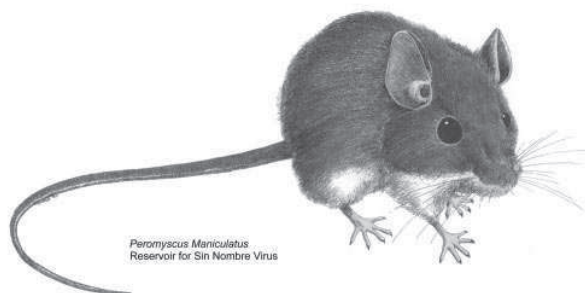
There are two different mice that share our houses in Columbia County. The native deer mouse (*Peromyscus maniculatus*) is by far the most common species. In the more urbanized parts of the county, the European house mouse (*Mus musculus*) may be a significant species, but rarely the most abundant. They are easy to tell apart. The deer mouse has white feet, a white underbelly, and white under its softly hairy tail. The European house mouse has no pure white coloration and it has smaller ears, a chunkier, more compact body, and a shorter, hairless tail in comparison to the deer mouse. The upper color of the deer mouse can be gray (when immature) and red/brown to dark brown when mature. Both of these species are very different from the field mice (voles) that inhabit our pastures and landscapes (and aren't interested in houses at all).

The deer mouse is very common in our forests and areas with mixed shrubs, trees, and grass. They are omnivorous, dining on insects, fungi, plants, seeds, and whatever else they can find with their sensitive noses. In turn, they are a meal for bobcats, house cats, sometimes dogs, coyotes, fox, weasels, skunks, owls, and snakes.

They are incredibly agile climbers and can get in through very small holes in structures.

In the absence of human structures, deer mice nest in tree cavities and stumps, under rocks and logs, and in other protected spaces. The nests look like mouse nests and the droppings are similar to European house mice as well. Moss is a preferred nest material but insulation is fine as well. They are very social and generally are active at night. They don't really hibernate, especially in heated houses, but they can slow way down in extremes of heat or cold.

Deer mice breed rather promiscuously and a female can give birth to a litter with several males' genetics. They generally breed two or more times a year with litters of 1 to 9. The young are independent after three weeks and can breed at six weeks.



Peromyscus Maniculatus
Reservoir for Sin Nombre Virus

The perception is that deer mice are more common this year in houses and other structures. Rodent populations, in general, fluctuate in response to feed quality and quantity and sometimes disease. It is thought that Douglas fir and big leaf maple seeds could impact breeding since they are both preferred food sources. I think it was a good year for maple seeds but not sure about fir cones. In addition, the cold winter may have driven more to look for heated shelter.

Either way, it isn't good to have them as house guests. They can damage wiring, causing serious fires. This isn't all that uncommon with mice, rats, and squirrels.

Deer mice are also the only vector in Oregon for the hanta virus. This

virus has to be inhaled to cause the disease. The respiratory disease is very serious since 40% of the people diagnosed, perish. Fortunately, hanta virus incidence in Oregon is low and most of it has been diagnosed east of the Cascades. There has been about one case a year for the past 20 years in Oregon. Recently, there was an unusual cluster of the disease near Seattle. Human exposure to the disease comes from cleaning up mouse debris with a vacuum and/or a broom. The broom or vacuum aerosolize the virus making it easy to inhale. While a standard surgical mask is better protection than nothing, it isn't perfect. The CDC suggests spraying mouse infested quarters with a 10% bleach solution and letting it sit for 10-20 minutes and then wet-mop the space.

Deer mice (and European house mice) are easily trapped. They invested (in their evolutionary path) heavily on reproduction rather than brains. They will visit traps baited with peanut butter and seeing one trapped mouse doesn't deter the others from coming to sniff and lick. In fact, I am convinced that trapping the first mouse is the hardest and that the smell brings the others in rapid succession.

Closing off as many openings in the outer "shell" of the house is the best preventive approach. Deer mice don't gnaw like rats. Look for openings around pipes that go from outside in. Plug the gaps with steel wool. Same for any other cracks you can find.

Baits are the last choice only because there are concerns with direct toxicity if domestic animals eat the bait directly. Since mice are known to cache bait, it may have been safe where you put it but not where they moved it. Bait stations help to reduce non-target poisoning but are not perfect. Finally, poisoned mice often die in the walls or under the house and do stink for a time. But their odor curve isn't near that of a dead rat. Still, since they are so easy to trap, that management approach combined with house tightening should be your primary control measures.

For more information see: <http://ipm.ucanr.edu/PMG/PESTNOTES/pn74161.html>. Photo courtesy of the Center for Disease Control.

Food Safety or Food Preservation Questions? OSU Extension Service Has Answers.

Are you planning to preserve food from your garden or purchased from a farm this summer? If so, call or visit the OSU Extension Service office before you start canning, freezing, or drying. Costly and potentially harmful mistakes can be made by using outdated canning recipes and instructions. You can find free publications at the Columbia County Extension office located at 505 N. Columbia River Highway in St. Helens (across from the Legacy Clinic). If you have questions, phone the office at (503) 397-3462. You can download for free all our food preservation publications at <http://extension.oregonstate.edu/fch/food-preservation>. An additional great resource is the National Center for home Food Preservation at <http://www.uga.edu/nchfp/>.

Take excess produce to the food bank, senior centers, or community meals programs. Cash donations to buy food are also greatly appreciated.

The Extension Service offers its programs and materials equally to all people.

Free newsletter

The Oregon State University Extension office in Columbia County publishes a monthly newsletter on gardening and farming topics (called Country Living) written/edited by yours truly. All you need to do is ask for it and it will be mailed to you. Call (503) 397-3462 to be put on the list. Alternatively, you can sign up for email notification of when to find the latest edition on the web at <http://extension.oregonstate.edu/columbia/>.

Contact information for the Extension office

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FORM LB-1 NOTICE OF BUDGET HEARING

A public meeting of the Columbia County 4H & Extension Service District will be held on June 7th, 2017 at 5:30 pm at Columbia County Courthouse, St. Helens, Oregon. The purpose of this meeting is to discuss the budget for the fiscal year beginning July 1, 2017 as approved by the Columbia County 4H and Extension Service District Budget Committee. A summary of the budget is presented below. A copy of the budget may be inspected or obtained at OSU Extension Office, 505 N. Columbia River Highway, St. Helens, OR, between the hours of 9 a.m. and 4 p.m. This budget is for an annual budget period. This budget was prepared on a basis of accounting that is the same as the preceding year.

Contact: Chip Bubl Telephone: 503 397-3462 Email: chip.bubl@oregonstate.edu

FINANCIAL SUMMARY - RESOURCES			
TOTAL OF ALL FUNDS	Actual Amount 2015-16	Adopted Budget This Year 2016-17	Approved Budget Next Year 2017-18
Beginning Fund Balance/Net Working Capital	429,950	504,519	529,519
Fees, Licenses, Permits, Fines, Assessments & Other Service Charges	17,804	23,000	21,000
Federal, State and all Other Grants, Gifts, Allocations and Donations			
Revenue from Bonds and Other Debt			
Interfund Transfers / Internal Service Reimbursements	20,000	23,000	20,000
All Other Resources Except Current Year Property Taxes			
Current Year Property Taxes Estimated to be Received	247,296	257,000	272,000
Total Resources	715,050	807,519	842,519

FINANCIAL SUMMARY - REQUIREMENTS BY OBJECT CLASSIFICATION			
Personnel Services	133,554	149,475	116,200
Materials and Services	82,452	119,500	114,500
Capital Outlay	9,222	8,000	9,000
Debt Service			
Interfund Transfers	20,000	23,000	20,000
Contingencies			
Special Payments			
Unappropriated Ending Balance and Reserved for Future Expenditure	469,822	507,544	582,819
Total Requirements	715,050	807,519	842,519

FINANCIAL SUMMARY - REQUIREMENTS AND FULL-TIME EQUIVALENT EMPLOYEES (FTE) BY ORGANIZATIONAL UNIT OR PROGRAM *			
Name of Organizational Unit or Program FTE for that unit or program			
FTE Extension Programs	3	3	3
Not Allocated to Organizational Unit or Program			
FTE	0	0	0
Total Requirements	715,050	807,519	842,519
Total FTE	3	3	3

STATEMENT OF CHANGES IN ACTIVITIES and SOURCES OF FINANCING *

Transition in classified staff will lower personnel costs in FY 17-18.

PROPERTY TAX LEVIES			
	Rate or Amount Imposed 2015-16	Rate or Amount Imposed This Year 2016-17	Rate or Amount Approved Next Year 2017-18
Permanent Rate Levy (rate limit _____ per \$1,000)	0.0571	0.0571	0.0571
Local Option Levy			
Levy For General Obligation Bonds			

STATEMENT OF INDEBTEDNESS		
LONG TERM DEBT	Estimated Debt Outstanding on July 1.	Estimated Debt Authorized, But Not Incurred on July 1
General Obligation Bonds		
Other Bonds		
Other Borrowings		
Total	\$0	\$0

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