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For Immediate Release

Dec. 2, 2011

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Rodent Problems Plague San Patricio County

San Patricio County is currently experiencing a large problem with mice and rats entering human dwellings. Because of the exceptional drought conditions, rodents are entering homes looking for food and water. We expect the problem to continue until drought conditions end. Your San Patricio County Department of Public Health and Texas Agrilife Extension Service would like to make some recommendations for dealing with the problem.

Rats and mice carry fleas which can harbor diseases. In addition, the urine and droppings of rodents can spread disease. Diseases such as salmonella, E. coli, Hanta virus and plague have been associated with rodent infestations. If rodents gnaw on electrical wires, they can cause house fires. They can also damage the electrical system of automobiles.

Three Principles of Rodent Control:

1. Eliminate Water
2. Eliminate Food
3. Eliminate Access

Eliminate Water

Check around your home or building for sources of water such as air conditioner condensation or standing water. If you find areas of standing water, eliminate the cause or establish drainage for the area. If you find pools of water, fill them with white rock to exclude rodents. This is the same principle as mosquito control.

Eliminate Food

Double bag food waste and be sure that garbage cans and dumpsters are covered. Wash garbage cans and dumpsters monthly with hot water to eliminate bits of old food sticking to the sides. Be sure that food debris and garbage is not discarded in loading docks and other areas. Don't leave food at work places or standing out. A mouse will travel up to 100 feet looking for food. Don't leave pet food or bird seed sitting out.

Eliminate access and deny shelter

A mouse can squeeze through a hole the size of a dime. A rat can squeeze through a hole the size of a quarter. Check your building for possible areas of access. Mice will chew through caulking. Use Brillo[®] pads or steel wool to close holes. Don't forget to check the eaves. Mice and rats can climb. Mice love cardboard boxes and newspapers.

If possible, clear an area of 25 to 50 feet around buildings. Eliminate water, food sources and trash piles where rodents may hide. Check parking areas for potential rodent habitats. Use landscaping to aid in preventing access for mice and rats.

Inside buildings, use pallets to lift material off of the floor and allow you to check underneath for signs of rodent infestation. Traps and glue strips are effective. Peanut butter with bird seed is a good choice for a mouse trap or a glue trap. Seal and double sack spoiled food.

For more information contact:

- San Patricio County Department of Public Health (364-6208, extension 120)
- Texas Agrilife Extension Service (361) 364-6234
- National Pest Management Association: <http://www.pestworld.org/Pest-Health-Threats>.

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