



Mice & Rats

Grade Level: 3rd-5th

Lesson Overview

This lesson will familiarize students with the characteristics of two community pests: the mouse and the rat. The students will learn what attracts these rodents and tips on keeping their homes rodent free.

Correlation with National Standards

National Science Teachers Association (NSTA)

- Science as Inquiry: Understanding about scientific inquiry
- Life Science Standard: Regulation and behavior of organisms

Estimated Lesson Time

- Preparation: 10 minutes
- Lesson: 45 minutes

Materials Needed:

- Pictures of mice and rats
- Copies of student handout “Mice and Rats”
- Pet mouse and pet rat (optional)

Student Materials Needed:

- Highlighter
- Pencil
- One sheet of notebook paper


Lesson

Set the Stage

The teacher will capture the students’ attention by playing a guessing game. Tell the students that they are going to learn about two types of mammals. The teacher will give the students clues and see if they can guess what animals they will study. This will let the teacher know their amount of background knowledge on the subject. Here are some examples of clues the teacher can give the students: they have tails, they run fast, they are small, they are dirty, they can sometimes be kept as pets and they can squeeze into small places. The teacher should keep giving clues until the students solve it.

Discussion

Talk with the students about what they know about rodents and their definitions of rodents. Discuss different mammals, rodents and eventually mice and rats. In order to control rodents from becoming pests, we must know how mice and rats reproduce, what they like to eat, where they like to live and what things contribute to their survival.




Teacher: A mammal feeds its young with mammary gland milk and all mammals have hair. A rodent is a type of mammal. Use an overhead film or chalkboard to list the main rodents (for example, mouse, rat, squirrel and beaver). They are characterized by large incisor teeth for gnawing. Both are born hairless and blind. Rats are heavier, longer and larger than mice. Let's take a look at the Mice and Rats sheet together. Discuss the information on the sheet as the students read along together. The students should use a highlighter to highlight the words in bold and their definitions. They may also highlight important facts on the sheet.

If you have a real mouse and/or rat to show the students, carefully display it in the classroom. Allow the students to come and observe the animals in groups. Now that they are familiar with these rodents, they should be able to notice their distinct differences in appearance and behavior. If you do not have access to a live rat or mouse, there are many websites with wonderful pictures you can share with the students. For example, http://www.terminix.com/Information/PestLibrary/Rodents/House_Mouse/default.aspx. Teachers should point out that, if taken care of properly, these “pet” rodents do not carry the diseases of wild rodents.

Activity

Pretend you work for Terminix. The rat and mouse populations in your area have increased recently. Your job is to write a letter to the local residents to inform them of how to help keep their homes safe from rodents. Based on what you have learned today, think of some ways to keep homes safe from mice and rats.

Modification: If a student is having difficulty formulating ideas, share tips from www.terminix.com on keeping your home rodent free.



The best ways to avoid invasions of rats are to (1) provide as little harborage as possible that might attract rodents, and (2) seal as many holes and cracks in the outside of your home as possible through which rats might enter. The following recommendations should be followed to help prevent rats from seeking the food and shelter provided by your home:

- Keep firewood stored as far from the home as possible and store it off the ground. During the winter, store only enough wood next to the house to burn every couple of days.
- If possible, remove any piles of debris, stones, bricks, etc. If these are near the foundation of the home they serve as harborages to attract rodents. Once there, it is any easy step for rodents to enter the building itself.
- Seal any hole or crack larger than 1/4 of an inch. Large holes or cracks should be stuffed with steel wool or wire mesh before sealing with caulk or foam, otherwise rodents can chew through to enter.
- Install a good, thick weatherstrip on the bottom of all doors to prevent rodents from entering. The garage door may prove difficult to seal completely, so the door from the garage to the house must be sealed tightly.

Students should develop their letters individually.

Assessment:

Students will be assessed on their:

- Participation during class discussion
- Creativity used in the letter
- Use of inference (for example, if a student knows a rat likes to eat pet food, you should keep all pet food stored in closed containers)

Classroom Show and Tell

Teachers, book a Terminix Expert to present to your class. Go to www.harrysbigadventure.com/learning-center.

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