

THE MOUSE TRAP NEWSLETTER

NSW Department of Primary Industries Mouse Newsletter - Volume No. 43
26 February 2009

ISSN 1836-702X

Table 1. Update by LHPA Staff Regarding Mouse Activity – 23 February 2009

<i>Authority and Reporting centre</i>	<i>Comments</i>
Central North	
Tamworth	There has been a little mouse activity around sheds and buildings. In the farming country there have been very few reports.
Coonabarabran	Reports of mice around silo bags, houses and sheds across the area. The indications are that numbers will continue to increase steadily.
Mudgee/Merriwa	A few reports of increased mouse and rat activity although neither are causing any trouble in the paddock at the moment. This may change shortly with winter sowing about to start. The Mudgee office has been mixing over 160kg of Racumin [®] bait per week for people to use around sheds etc. Mice appear to have built up on an abundance of summer grass seed and will possibly be a problem over autumn and winter.
Central West	
Dubbo	Mouse potential around Dubbo is high given the conditions persisting throughout the region. There have been a number of reports of increasing mouse activity around the Dubbo district as well as from the Warren and Narromine areas mostly.
Coonamble	Plenty of mice and plenty of water with most areas receiving >250mm in the last week leaving a vast amount of water lying over paddocks. Prior to that a lot of the activity was mainly noticed around houses and sheds. Many in the district are concentrating on stock work at the moment so not much has been reported about mice in cropping paddocks, whether anyone has had a good look yet I'm not sure. We have been mixing some Racumin [®] lately for around houses and sheds. Unfortunately I can't really pinpoint hatching areas but the mice are quite widespread, both in and out of town also. I'm not sure what sort of impact this rain has had on the overall mouse population as I'm unable to gauge what sort of numbers were out in paddocks but hopefully there would be a few dead from it all. I would say that they will be a potential problem in winter but I will ask a few more people and see if they foresee some problems coming up.
Nyngan	There have been reports of increasing mouse activity around the Nyngan district. Some sign of mice in paddocks although wet with some reports around houses and sheds.
Cumberland	
Moss Vale	No report submitted.
Maitland	No report submitted.
Darling	
Cobar	No report submitted.
Bourke/Brewarrina	The mice at Brewarrina seem to be in all dwellings. The local cotton group have already aerial baited their corn. Also a pumpkin grower has had to re sow & bait. With the way the weather is all the local crop growers will be sowing this year, might have to sow & bait at the same time. Heavy rain and some flooding will need monitoring in the autumn.
Hume	
Wagga Wagga	No recent mouse activity reported to the Authority. No bait issued.
Hume	There doesn't seem to be any increase in mice numbers in this part of the world, probably all died of thirst or starvation or were eaten by the starving locusts.
Gundagai	No mouse activity reported to the Authority at this stage.
Lachlan	
Condobolin	No increase in mice activity, in the area yet, but will keep an eye on what is happening as and when the weather gets cooler. Reports of mice in a sorghum and a sunflower crop which is about to be treated.
Forbes	Not much sign of any mice in paddocks with a small number being reported around houses and sheds.

Young	A little bit of mouse activity reported in cropping country but there is some activity around grain storages, sheds and buildings. A few reports of rats in the district.
Mid Coast	No report submitted.
New England	No mouse activity to report.
Armidale	No mouse activity to report.
North West	Have only received 2 significant mouse reports across the Authority. Both have, or will be spraying with Zinc Phosphide. The first is near the Newell highway on the boundary between the Moree and Narrabri sectors. The second was from Boggabilla. It is a pretty good season for mice up this way with a wet wheat harvest causing some lodging, good sorghum crops and many of the grasses seeding twice providing plenty of feed. Indications are a light infestation right across the Authority with the odd hot spot and with the exception of most of the Walgett sector where reports most will have drowned. The problem is that most cockies are not checking and might not find them in the grass. Plenty of potential.
Narrabri	Ranger had an early start on Friday and was surprised by the number of mice running across or squashed on the road between Moree and Narrabri, and landholders are reporting a bit of a build up around sheds and buildings.
Warialda	Very quiet in the north. Very wet conditions, not many reports of mice even around sheds. From the southern end - possibility of some mice in paddocks but not visible yet.
Moree	There have been reports of mouse activity in the Boggabilla area in a young sorghum crop. The landholder reported seeing 6 to 8 mice per 10 metres by torch light on the heads of a sorghum crop. Some sign of mice in paddocks although wet with some reports around houses and sheds.
Walgett	No reports so far. No-one has reported any sightings in the field but there could be a few around sheds. Very wet so will need to be vigilant in early autumn.
Riverina	
Deniliquin	At this stage it seems there is not much of a problem. Most people say there is an odd mouse about but they are not too concerned at this stage. Moulamein district, No reports of in-crop activity.
Hay	There are no reports coming in from landholders re any build up in numbers in the Hay district. There is very little of anything for mice to eat but they are more noticeable around farm buildings as that is there only food source at the moment. There are less stock in the district than any time in the last 30 years – most are out of the area on agistment, hence little hand feeding (handling grain) is required at this stage. Much of our country's topsoil is moving, or is ready to blow away! Predictions for the future months: unless lots of rain fall in the autumn months there won't be a huge build up in pastures / crops with seed to generate high mice numbers for some time in this district.
Jerilderie	No recent mouse activity reported to the Authority. No bait issued.
Narrandera	No mouse activity reported on a broadacre scale, nil crop damage reports either. Only minimum activity around sheds etc.
Tablelands	
Bathurst	No mouse activity to report.
Molong	Some reports around houses and sheds.
Yass	No reports of mice in the Yass district to date.
Western	
Balranald/ Wentworth	No mouse activity to report in the Western Authority. Would imagine if they are there they will be lost and bloody hungry!
Hillston	At this stage it seems there is not much of a problem. Most people say there is an odd mouse about particularly around sheds but they are not too concerned. One report of some mice in a crop.

GENERAL DISCUSSION

Current situation in NSW

During the past three months, very little mouse activity has been reported except for normal late summer activity around sheds and farm buildings. A few reports from residential areas of mouse activity but generally most enquiries were about baits and trapping.

There have been very few requests for baits for around farm buildings and grain storages. There is still

sufficient bait in the Authority system and if given adequate warning, Animal Control Technologies should be able to supply sufficient to deal with minor increases in mouse numbers. Hopefully not a lot will be needed.

As stated before, there are always some mice present in cropping systems and other environments in NSW. Mouse populations are highly dynamic and fluctuate according to climatic factors, availability of food and shelter, predation and disease.

Central and southern NSW non-irrigated cropping areas are still on the back of low mouse activity through summer meaning that it is important to monitor mouse activity well into autumn and winter. Remember, mouse populations coming into spring can increase rapidly and in localised situations under ideal conditions, especially in irrigation.

Any increase in mouse numbers or indications of any damage should be reported immediately to the local Livestock Health & Pest Authority.

A note to all growers:

It is essential that all growers remain vigilant and maintain a greater level of monitoring for mice in the following months particularly in the north of the state where good rains may have generated sufficient high protein feed for breeding. Research tends to indicate that mouse numbers will erupt to plague proportions after a major drought following on from good soaking rains. These rains have occurred over much of northern and central NSW in the late summer period.

In many areas where mice are likely to increase, there has been a high acceptance of conservation farming practices; particularly direct drilling and minimum tillage strategies. With the lack of habitat destruction, growers should be aware of the potential for greater mouse activity than normal, particularly those who are planting canola, lupins and cereals in 2009. Once rain has fallen then there is a high probability that mouse numbers may increase to damaging levels.

Monitoring

Monitoring and observation can provide sufficient warning for potential problems through this autumn and into spring. Much mouse damage can be prevented if farmers monitor their mouse activity and act early. Unfortunately, many farmers do not include mouse monitoring in their routine farm management. The simple act of detecting mouse activity through a paddock walk in either grassy verges to crops, check-banks in irrigation or a paddock about to be sown allows farmers to get early advice from their local LHPA Ranger or NSW DPI District Agronomist.

Note: Simple monitoring techniques which are relatively quick and easy to use, are available on the NSW DPI web site or from your local Livestock Health & Pest Authority Ranger. For example Census cards can indicate activity but their results should be viewed with caution as mice might not always chew cards if there is alternative food available. Your local Livestock Health & Pest Authority can provide advice and census cards.

THE NEXT MOUSE TRAP WILL BE ISSUED WHEN CHANGES IN ACTIVITY ARE EXPERIENCED

The web page for this newsletter and to other mouse packages is:

<http://www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/agriculture/pests-weeds/vertebrate-pests> and follow MICE