



U. S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
Office of the Secretary
Press Service



Release - Immediate.

1/16/22

5-11-22

MICE AND OTHER RODENTS CAUSE
HEAVY LOSS TO ORCHARDISTS.

Rat, mouse, and other rodent depredations in New England, New York, and along the north Atlantic seaboard are under active investigation by the Biological Survey, United States Department of Agriculture, with a view to assisting local authorities in checking the great losses being inflicted by these pests. They do serious damage to fruit trees.

A synopsis of the findings of a representative of the department in the States thus far visited follows:

Maine--Loss of approximately 1,000,000 apple trees in Maine during the past 10 years is attributed primarily to winter killing and secondarily to mice. In one year the loss due to mice was estimated at $7\frac{1}{2}$ per cent of the young trees of the State. Best protection, although not altogether adequate, is afforded by wire screens of suitable mesh, dipped in paint, and set around the base of the tree. Poisoning in the fall also is recommended.

New Hampshire--The apple industry has received a severe setback in New Hampshire, due largely to neglect and the ravages of the gypsy moth, and to a less extent to field mice. Apparently the turn for the better has come. Orchardists are finding protection against mice in the use of wire mesh at the base of the young tree. Rabbits and woodchucks also do considerable damage to orchards in certain sections.

Vermont.--A little damage is reported each year, but not enough to be called serious.

Massachusetts.--Severe damage was done to the orchards of the State two years ago by mice, and bridge-grafting of 13,000 trees was immediately undertaken which afforded a large saving to farmers, according to a report by the State extension officials. European hares are causing damage to orchardists in the vicinity of Great Barrington. Rats seem to be particularly numerous in the Connecticut Valley, and are a great pest. (Rats along the water front in Boston are said by local authorities to be numerous.)

Rhode Island.--Woodchucks beat mice and rats in inflicting damage to farmers in Rhode Island. These animals are fond of the soy bean, work fast, cover much ground, and destroy a large area of beans quickly. Rats abound also and in many instances farmers are unable to buy seed, feed, and provisions in large quantities because of their inability to protect them from rats. Methods of mouse poisoning with grain and sweet-potato bait and of rat poisoning with barium carbonate were demonstrated by a representative of the department to approximately 150 farmers.

Connecticut.--Investigation of one large farm containing 19,000 fruit trees showed heavy infestation by almost every rodent pest known to New England. Pine and meadow mice had been extremely destructive to orchard trees; woodchucks were numerous; cottontail rabbits damaged the trees to some extent; moles plowed up the lawns; and European hares were in the vicinity. The entire farm was a haven for many varieties of pests.

New York.--Serious orchard damage from mice occurred two years ago in the Hudson River fruit section, south of Albany, and in western New York, but little definite information is available as to damage at the present time. One authority estimates that there is a loss of at least $1\frac{1}{2}$ per cent of young apple trees each year. As there are at least 3,000,000 young apple trees in the State, such a loss would amount to several hundred thousand dollars annually and in a bad year would easily mount into the millions.

Pennsylvania.--Although Pennsylvania is one of the largest apple-producing States, detailed information concerning rodent depredations in orchards is so incomplete that an accurate survey at this time is impossible. Rabbit injury to orchards in Pennsylvania is more noticeable than in most States, as the rabbits are protected by law for 11 of the 12 months. Woodchucks are fairly numerous and cause annoyance and some injury. The injury to young trees from mice appears considerable in many sections.

New Jersey.--Closer observation is being made of the damage done by rodents, and first steps in the development of control measures are being undertaken.

Delaware.--There has been some damage to orchard trees by pine and meadow mice, but not enough to arouse the interest of extension specialists in the matter.