

**MOUSE SEASON MEANS TIME TO STOCK PLENTY OF
PEANUT BUTTER & ANTIFREEZE
10/05/99**

According to Chinese lore it's the Year of the Dragon. Now, I beg to differ with that even though they are traditionally very intelligent people. However, my vote is cast for the mouse. By observation and conversations with others, we are overrun with mice.

We have always had a smattering of the little rodents, but nothing compared to this year's proliferation. When we bought our home they were here and I searched endlessly for their entrances in a vain attempt to thwart their passage. After building my in-law's new home and finding even that was not mouse proof, I gave up.

They seem to confine their activities to the cellar and it's seldom they announce their presence elsewhere in the house. Two traps are permanent fixtures on a shelf in the cellar that seem to be their favorite haunt.

As a former trapper that augmented a good portion of my yearly income trapping furbearers, I prefer traps to eliminate them. It is more direct than either poison or the sticky sheets on the market and much more humane. One of my neighbors on Woodhull Lake has carried compassion for them to new heights. Catching them in a live trap they are then transported to the head of the lake and released. If I had the time, I probably would too.

I can tolerate mice in camp for short periods of time. If the food and bedding is kept out of their reach they are not so obnoxious. Old trapping buddy Bill Marleau did not share my views in their regard. He set the old style octagon traps that choked them to death. If I heard them pushing the trap around on the floor in their death throes, I would get out of bed and release them outside.

They have overstepped their bounds in camp this year just by sheer numbers and it's been all out war. I have discovered a new trap that is the best I have ever used. It never misses and the mouse is dead almost instantly. It is called the Better Mouse Trap. It is made by Intruder in Rice Lake, WI, and sold locally. It can be set with one hand and the mouse tossed the same way without ever touching it. One small dab of peanut butter is good for weeks. They never get a chance to finish it.

Traps in camps that cannot be emptied every day in hot weather pose a problem. You can solve that with the old tried and true lumber camp trap. Start by punching a small hole in either end of a soda or beer can exactly in the center. Pass a wire through both ends and anchor it tautly across the top and center of a five-gallon plastic pail. Put six inches of water or antifreeze in the pail and place a ramp from the floor up to the edge of the pail. Smear a ring of peanut butter around the center of the can and the mice will do the rest. Antifreeze is better than water as it sort of pickles the mice and kills the smell if the trap isn't tended to for a week or so.

Most of the mice we have in this area are deer or woods mice and relatively clean. They are a fact of life for most of us and it's an ongoing battle to control them. It would take a good cat to control them this year.

We had two cats, a brother and sister, with the brother being the hunter. Naturally, a coyote or great homed owl scooped one of them up. The sister is a beautiful cat, but could care less about mice. Not all bad when you consider the times I have stepped in the remains of nightly kills in my bare feet in the dark.

Mice cause a lot of damage and can be expensive in other ways. Consider the real estate sale that is clinched on a million-dollar camp and goes down the tube when a mouse is spotted tooling across the floor.

A person who would be deterred by such an event would fit the description once given by a cousin of mine for one who is squeamish: "You know, the kind of guy who would get up out of the bathtub to take a pee."