

Lecture No. 24 RODENT DAMAGE AND THEIR MANAGEMENT

Vertebrata

Class : Mammalia

Order : Rodentia

1. House rat, Roof rat, Black rat, *Rattus rattus*

Nature of damage: It eats up all food materials and can damage wood, plastic, rubber and even soft metals also. As it is responsible for plague, it is considered as the most expensive rat of India. Generally the droppings are found scattered and banana shaped.

Habit: Being nocturnal in habit, it can be rarely seen during day time. It is a good swimmer and good climber also. It prefers to stay in dusty places. It is rarely found in sewers also. It rarely moves out of houses or crosses the big lanes. It can climb high to enter through roofs.

2. House mouse, *Mus musculus*

Nature of damage: Their infestation imparts a typical smell to store rooms and stocks. They feed on cereals, cereal products, vegetables, meat, fats, carbohydrates, etc. and can damage wooden furniture, paper, clothes, rubber, plastic and leather goods, etc. They damage more than what they eat. They are responsible for contamination of food with hairs, urine, excreta; and also spreading *Salmonella* organisms responsible for food poisoning. They may cause virus infection not only by faecal infection but also by walking over the foodgrains etc. They are responsible for disease like ringworm. The droppings are scattered and spindle shaped.

Habits: It prefers to stay in holes, in floors or under the boxes or any other dark place suitable for hiding. It is active during night but can be seen in daytime also. Movements are almost like darting. Feeding is confined normally upto 10 meters. A mouse does not run along 'rat runs'.

3. Norway rat, Brown rat, Sewer rat, Ship rat, *Rattus norvegicus*

Nature of damage: Feeds on grain. Damage containers i.e. bags/ cartons. Pollutes grain with excreta, droppings and hairs. Spread various diseases. Droppings found in groups and spindle shaped.

Habits: It is habituated of making burrows outside grain stores but often lives in sewers. The burrows are only on surface with two to five openings. Normally it stays within a radius of 25 to 30 meters. It is a good swimmer. Life span is for one year.

4. Smaller bandicoot, Indian mole rat, Lesser bandicoot, Outdoor rat, *Bandicota bengalensis*

Nature of damage: Being omnivorous it feeds on grains, fruits, vegetables, nuts, sometimes flesh of young ones and dead animals. It damages crops in fields (sugarcane, wheat, paddy, maize, etc.) and gardens besides grain in granaries at times. But the damage to cereals is little as it prefers to cut cereal crop plants particularly 'ear heads'