

Pointers For Parents

Protecting Children From Rodent-Borne Diseases

(NAPS)—Increasingly, parents are learning to protect their families' safety and health by taking steps to keep their homes free of mice and rats.

Rodents not only threaten the home by damaging property, they also endanger the health of children and can cause deadly diseases. Rodents have been linked to asthma and are the cause of the deadly Hantavirus disease.

Yet according to a recent survey commissioned by Orkin Pest Control, only 42 percent of parents indicated "disease" as their greatest fear when seeing a rodent in their home. Another 22 percent cited "cleanliness."

Hantavirus Pulmonary Syndrome (HPS) is transmitted only by rodents and has no known cure. In 2000, there were at least 23 confirmed cases of HPS in the United States, seven of which were fatal.

The most common way of contracting the virus is by breathing air contaminated with airborne particles from a contaminated rodent. Parents should be aware when sweeping or cleaning dry, dusty attics where rodents may live and breed. The common house mouse does not carry HPS, but "carrier rodents" such as deer mice, cotton rats and rice rats can find their way into the home.

Parents can discourage rodent activity in the home by following these simple tips:

- Trim and prune trees, shrubs or other plants around the home
- Remove any rubbish or debris from around the outside perimeter of the home
- Seal cracks and holes with



A professional pest control operator can help protect a family's health by getting rid of rodents, a common cause of disease.

steel wool, sheet metal, foam sealants, hardware cloth and/or mortar

- Seal all doors to the outside and reduce the opening beneath them with kick plates or sheet metal
- Work with family members to help keep excess or standing water to a minimum
- Ensure that drainage ditches flow freely and completely drain water away from the home
- Take out trash frequently
- Use liners in garbage cans and keep them covered
- Keep storage areas dry and organized
- Regularly sweep and vacuum floors and
- Get a free home inspection by calling 800-800-ORKIN

For more information, parents can request a free sanitation video by calling 1-800-563-HOUSE or by visiting the "Ask Orkin" Web site at www.orkin.com.