

## House Mouse

*Mus domesticus* (Linnaeus, 1758)

Order: Rodentia

Although the house mouse is found mainly in association with people and trade, it also occurs in the countryside and in gardens. The body of the house mouse measures 60-100mm, with a tail almost as long again. Adults weigh 12 to 22 grams. The fur is greasy grey all over and there are pink ears and a long bald scaly tail. The eyes are less obvious than those of the wood mouse

The footprints of the house mouse are small, with a hind foot length of about 20-30mm. The forefeet have 4 toes, whilst the hind feet have 5. Droppings are cylindrical and about 8mm long with rounded ends.



The house mouse is mainly nocturnal, although occasionally active during the day. They breed throughout the year at monthly intervals, the female giving birth to litters of 4 to 8 young. Females in breeding groups often pool their young and nurse the pups of other females. The young are weaned at 18-22 days. The social structure of the house mouse is very variable depending on habitat and population density. Where food is abundant a single dominant male mates with several breeding females, but subordinate males and females may also occur. House mice can live to about 18 months, with few animals surviving two breeding seasons

Originally the house mouse was an inhabitant of desert rocks in Asia, but in the UK it is most often found in buildings—domestic, industrial and agricultural. Where wood mice are absent they may also occur in hedges and sheltered areas near to buildings. Before the introduction of the combine harvester the wood mouse was common in grain fields. They are rarely found in woodland in the UK. Improvements in buildings and storage mean that house mice are less common than they were 50 years ago, House mice build elaborate or simple systems of tunnels, either excavated from soft earth or within buildings and walls. Depending on the abundance of food, the territory of a group may be a few square metres up to a 2 km square.

House mice are omnivorous, most feeding on grain, livestock feeds and stored products but they also eat seeds, nuts, fruits, buds and fungi. They will also eat invertebrates such as caterpillars and worms.

Although domestic cats may predate on house mice, most die from poisoning, cold or disease. Rats are also known to kill significant numbers, and when the mice occur in the open other predators such as foxes and owls may kill many.



## ENVIRONMENTAL RECORDS CENTRE

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

### Cornwall Mammal Group

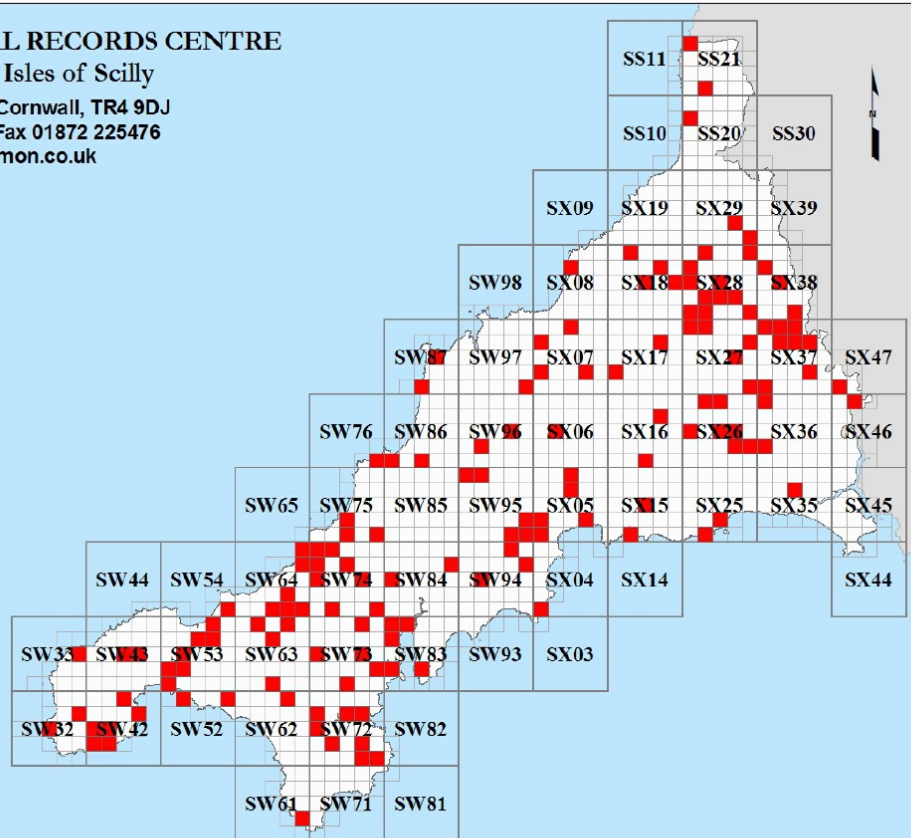
House mouse

*Mus musculus*

As of September 2009

#### Legend

-  Grid 10 Km
-  Grid 2 Km (Tetrad)
-  House mouse records, 2000-2009



0 5 10 20 Kilometers

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#### Local distribution and key sites

The map shows that the House Mouse is widespread but probably under recorded throughout Cornwall.

#### **Number of records per date class**

2002 to 2006 inclusive 245

1997 to 2001 inclusive 15

All records previous to 1997 65

**Total 325**

Originally from Asia, the house mouse now occurs throughout much of Europe and also parts of North Africa and the Middle East

Common and widespread species within its range, possibly the most widespread mammal after humans.— the house mouse is a major pest species causing damage to stored food through gnawing and contamination. There is no specific legal protection locally or in the UK.

#### Survey Methods

- Small mammal trapping
- Cat kill records
- Pest control reports
- Incidental sightings – bird feeders, mouse traps, live sightings

# DRAFT

#### Did you know?

- The mouse's tail is used to regulate body temperature and is shorter in mice from colder regions.
- The laboratory mouse is a highly inbred variety of the house mouse

#### Key references

- Berry, R.J, Tattershall, F.H. & Hurst, J. (2008) in Harris, S. and Yalden, D.W. (Eds.) Mammals of the British Isles: Handbook, 4th Ed. The Mammal Society
- Flowerdew, J.R. (1993) Mice and Voles. Whittet Books, London.