

Mice invasion in parts of Lake Tahoe

By Kathryn Reed

It's not just people's homes that have been flooded in the Tahoe area. All that water is making mice seek higher ground, too.

"It's the worst I've seen in decades," Jim Cecil, owner of Boulder Exterminator in South Lake Tahoe, told *Lake Tahoe News* of the rodent infestation.

Mice are the biggest issue, with chipmunks and squirrels next. The latter are more prone to get into



One less mouse in as South Lake Tahoe garage. Photo/LTN

walls, while mice scamper about garages and inside houses.

A large number of calls have come from the Tahoe Keys area because it's on such a high water table. All the rain has flooded the burrows where the critters had been spending the winter. They want someplace dry, and that someplace is where people live.

Ben Gardner, service manager for Lakeside Termite & Pest Control, said he's getting calls from around the lake about rodent problems.

"The rain flushes them out of their hiding spots or where they make their nest or home. They are being more aggressive about getting into homes," Gardner told *Lake Tahoe News*.

The goal is to find where they are coming in from and to seal up that location. That's hard to do because mice, even chipmunks, can squeeze through a quarter-inch opening.

And it's never just one. They bring their family and friends. The females can leave a scent behind. This draws the guys. Mice can have upward of a dozen babies. Then it's pretty much an infestation.

For Joe DeCasper, owner of Paragon Pest Control in Tahoe City, he was getting more rodent calls two years ago with the drought conditions. Normally in winter mice are pretty lethargic creatures. But when it was a warm, dry spring the mice were more active and much friskier.

He did say in the last couple of weeks there has been a mouse outbreak in his region.

Mice don't discriminate – they hit up residences and commercial structures.

All of the pest control businesses *Lake Tahoe News* spoke with said poison is frowned upon. Some is still used, but not like the old days.

As of July 1, 2014, California banned the sale of most d-Con products. The federal Environmental Protection Agency reached an agreement with manufacturer Reckitt Benckiser that production stop nationwide on a dozen d-Con products in 2014, with distribution prohibited after March 31, 2015.

"Bait stations are required for consumer products to protect

children and pets from contact with bait pellets,” according to the EPA.

Some Tahoe pest control businesses use live traps; some have traps that kill.

For the do-it-yourselfers, steel wool can be a good plug for holes. Mice have scissor teeth, so it’s hard for them chew through it. Check for gaps around interior plumbing. Anywhere there is daylight under doors a mouse can come in. Outside vents can be another entry point.

While some people are reporting ants as being an issue, that’s usually more of a spring problem in Tahoe. Carpenter ants are the issue here.

“We get little sunshine and they think spring,” Cecil said of ants. “Right now all you can do is bait.” This is because the best solution is an outside treatment, and that’s impossible with all the snow.

Spiders are also making their way indoors. The pest guys say to call them for help.