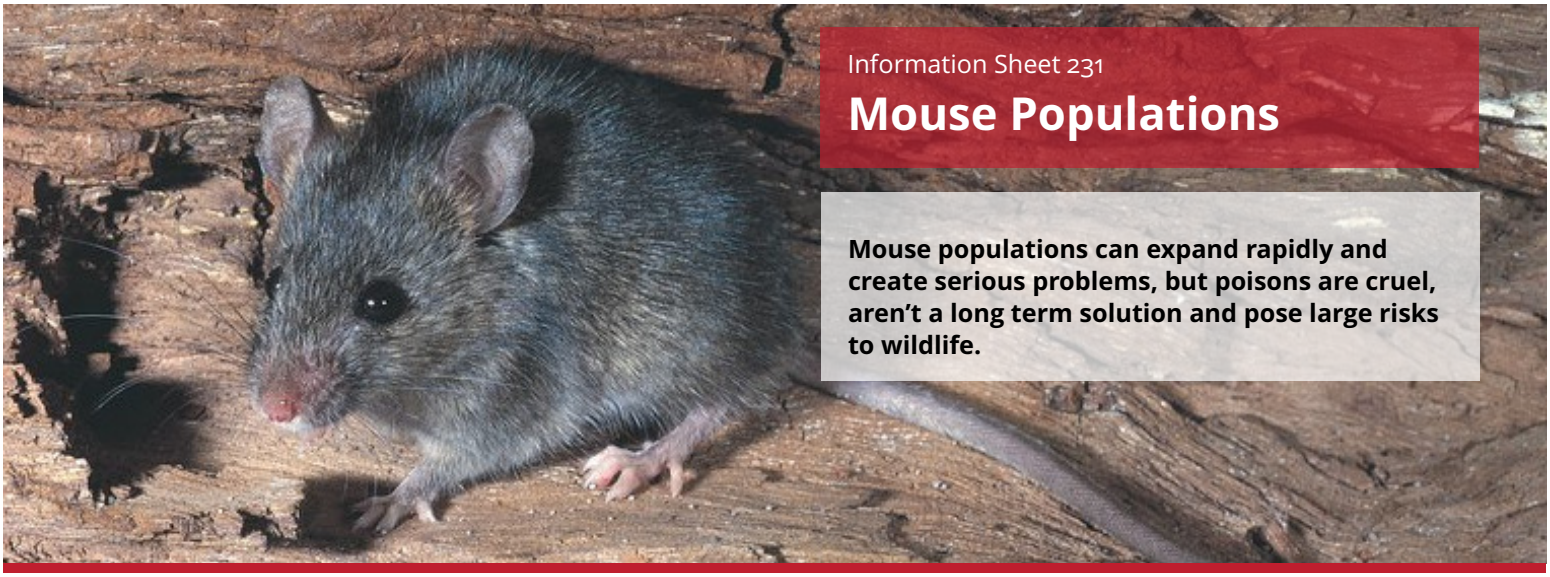

Information Sheet 231

Mouse Populations

Mouse populations can expand rapidly and create serious problems, but poisons are cruel, aren't a long term solution and pose large risks to wildlife.

Background

Rapid increases in the number of mice occur periodically in *Australia's agricultural areas*[1]. In very large numbers, the animals can cause significant damage, distress and economic loss.

The species in question is the introduced species of the house mouse who was *introduced from Western Europe*[2] on British, or possibly Dutch, ships early in colonisation.

European cereal crops have been established as monocultures in large areas of Australia, uniting mice with their natural food and *creating an ideal habitat*[3]. *A high percentage of cereal is grown to feed farmed animals*[4]. Expansion of animal agriculture and monoculture crops has destroyed natural ecosystems (see our Land Clearing Policy) and reduced potential mouse predators, such as reptiles, quolls, raptors and owls.

Population eruptions of mice have been recorded for hundreds of years, yet we still fail to act in a proactive manner, despite having knowledge and tools. Population booms can usually be predicted; for example, when *a La Niña*[5] event occurs. Farmers can use the CSIRO mouse reporting app "*Mouse Alert*[6]" to monitor population increases, and the tool is regarded as quite accurate.

The widespread use of poison baits is not the answer. Poisons pollute the environment and cause immense animal suffering and death, not only to mice, but also to non-target species including *birds of prey*[7] and domestic *cats and dogs*[8].

Strategic planning is required to prevent these events and/or stop them from becoming uncontrollable. Possible actions include reducing monoculture crops, restoring natural habitat, using biodiversity-sensitive agriculture and fertility control.

The fertility of any animal can be controlled with appropriate investment in research, and fertility control is likely the most effective solution.

Some products exist but need more research and development, *e.g. Conntraceptol*. Although gene-based approaches sound promising, they should be investigated and applied with caution (see our Genetic Manipulation Policy). Money invested today is money and lives saved in the future.

Governments must invest in humane and species-specific methods of population management by supporting independent research and collaborations between research institutions and farmers.

Related Policies

Genetic Manipulation[9], Land Clearing[10], Wildlife Care[11], Wildlife Protection[12]

Policy

The Animal Justice Party (AJP) is opposed to reactionary approaches to high numbers of house mice (*Mus musculus*), and believes that proactive strategies are more humane and effective. More must be done by government and industry to predict, prevent, and reduce the impact of population booms. The rushed approval and roll-out of non-specific poisons can be a *disaster for the environment*[13], with secondary poisoning of wildlife and companion animals and long-term ecological

[1] https://besjournals.onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/full/10.1111/j.1365-2664.2007.01296.x
[2] https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3236204/
[3] https://academic.oup.com/biolinnean/article/84/3/617/2701463?login=true
[4] http://www.fao.org/faostat/en/#data/FBS
[5] https://www.australiangeographic.com.au/topics/wildlife/2021/04/a-land-of-flooding-plagues-australias-history-of-mice-and-rat-irruptions/
[6] https://www.csiro.au/en/research/animals/pests/mouse-census
[7] https://news.csu.edu.au/latest-news/double-edged-sword-of-plagues-and-rodenticides
[8] https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2021/apr/21/dog-on-death-row-after-baits-used-to-control-australian-mouse-plague-poison-pets
[9] https://animaljusticeparty.org/genetic-manipulation/
[10] https://animaljusticeparty.org/land-clearing/
[11] https://animaljusticeparty.org/policieslist/animals/wildlife-care/
[12] https://animaljusticeparty.org/policieslist/animals/wildlife-protection/
[13] https://theconversation.com/mouse-plague-bromadiolone-will-obliterate-mice-but-itll-poison-eagles-snakes-and-owls-too-160995

ANIMAL JUSTICE PARTY

Want a voice for animals in Parliament? Join, donate, or find out more about the Animal Justice Party at **animaljusticeparty.org**. You can also read our policies, here: **animaljusticeparty.org/policieslist**.

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impacts being of great concern. Poisoning mice is cruel and ineffective in the long-term.

Key Objectives

1. Oppose the use of poisons and other lethal methods against mice.
2. Work with the grain industry and researchers to predict and prevent future population booms in mice.
3. Invest in research into non-lethal fertility control measures.