



RAPPAHANNOCK-RAPIDAN HEALTH DISTRICT Environmental Health Quarterly Updates



Winter Best Pest Practices for Food Establishments

As the winter chill sets in, cozying up indoors with friends and family seems like a real treat—unless, of course you have an unwanted guest. As the cold sets in, rodents begin seeking warm harborage and easier access to food. Foodservice, hospitality, and retail establishments – with their abundance of food, as well as hidden nooks and crannies – can be particularly attractive to these rodent pests.

Rodent Science

It is often said that rodents have poor vision, this is true only in relation to human eyesight in the light. They have an impressive ability to see contrast and shadows in the dark and they use this to find shelter. Even during the day when their eyesight is less keen, a rodent gets around and finds holes quite easily by using its whiskers. A mouse can move its whiskers in broad sweeps, side to side, or hold them straight out in front to feel the wall or the hole where it wants to go.

How do rodents get in?

A mouse can enter a building through an opening as small as a dime, a rat through one the size of a quarter. From this, it's not hard to see that it's easy for rodents to slip into buildings beneath doors, through vent openings, and via small gaps around cables, wires, and pipes.

The following are other entry points to be aware of – and avoid:

- Doors left open (including dock doors), especially after dark.
- Doors that do not properly close.
- Structural damage (or design) that creates holes or gaps.
- Unscreened vents and pipe chases.

- Uninspected product deliveries.

How do you keep rodents out?

Exterior protection. Minimize food, water, and harborage areas:

- Keep garbage areas clean and away from the facility; have tight-fitting lids on all receptacles.
- Clear clutter and exterior storage.
- Eliminate standing water.
- Remove weeds, tall grass, leaves, etc.

Entry exclusion. Create a barrier to minimize entry points:

- Trim trees and shrubs so they don't touch the building as rodents will use this to reach entry points.
- Seal holes and gaps in the structure, including openings around pipes and utility wires.
- Seal all doors and windows, regularly inspect and repair screening, door sweeps, etc.
- Keep doors closed when not in use, educating employees on reasons for not propping them open during smoke or lunch breaks.
- Install climb guards (e.g., a metal plate on the wall beneath docks to prevent rodents from climbing).
- Inspect incoming goods for the presence of pests.

Interior reinforcement. Minimize conducive conditions within the facility:

- Clean spills immediately.
- Regularly inspect and clean under shelves and other less visible areas. Check warm areas around hot water heater, fryers, and behind refrigeration units.
- Eliminate standing water and accumulated condensation.
- Seal gaps and holes that could lead to hidden harborage.

Adapted from [A Winning Playbook for Rodent Defense and Food Safety](#)



HOW NOROVIRUS ENTERS A RESTAURANT:



foodsafetymatters



EMPLOYEES



CUSTOMERS



FOOD CONTAMINATED

FOODS TYPICALLY IMPLICATED:

SALADS, SANDWICHES OR OTHER READY-TO-EAT ITEMS;
RAW OYSTERS (FROM SEWAGE-CONTAMINATED GROWING WATERS)



Source: Center for Disease Control

Noro in a Food Facility

Norovirus is the leading cause of outbreaks of diarrhea and vomiting in the US, and it spreads quickly. It infects 19-21 million people annually and causes 58% of foodborne illnesses (*Source: CDC)

SYMPTOMS:

- Abdominal pain
- Diarrhea
- Vomiting

PREVENTION:

- Do not prepare, handle food, or care for others when you are sick
- Wash hands with soap and water. Sanitizer alone is not sufficient
- Cook seafood to proper temperatures
- Wash fruits and vegetables
- Routinely clean and sanitize kitchen utensils and equipment, especially after handling shellfish
- Educate and train prevention and response procedures to all staff

CLEAN AND DISINFECT:

After someone vomits or has diarrhea, clean and disinfect the entire area immediately.

- Wear protective clothing, such as disposable gloves, apron and mask
- Use absorbent material to absorb the liquid

- Dispose of paper towels/waste and mop heads in a trash bag
- Disinfect all surfaces using a chlorine bleach solution with a concentration of 1000 to 5000 ppm or an EPA-registered disinfecting product against norovirus.
- Leave disinfectant on the affected area for at least 5 minutes
- Clean the entire area again with soap and hot water
 - Take out the trash, and wash your hands thoroughly with soap and water
 - Wash laundry well at a maximum available cycle length and machine dry at highest heat setting

REACH OUT TO YOUR LHD FOR GUIDANCE IF YOU SUSPECT A CASE/OUTBREAK.



Attention all hotels & tourist lodging!

Human trafficking updates: Please place these human trafficking indicators and reporting instructional flyers in staff areas (behind the front desk, in breakrooms, etc.) to keep the information fresh.

Human Trafficking flyer in multiple languages:

The flyer is available in English, Bengali, Gujarati, Hindi, and Spanish here:
[Human Trafficking - Environmental Health \(virginia.gov\)](https://www.virginia.gov/human-trafficking-environmental-health)

Human Trafficking in Hotels



Sex trafficking occurs when someone encourages, causes, or attempts to cause a person to engage in prostitution for money or something of value.

Human trafficking affects people of all ages, genders, and nationalities.

Victims may appear to cooperate and often will not ask for help.

Common indicators of human trafficking:

Pay with cash or pre-paid card

Request room near exit or with view of parking lot

Multiple rooms for one couple

Multiple visitors to one room for short periods

Not in control of their own phone, money, or ID

Nervous or unable to speak for themselves

Signs of abuse, malnutrition, or drug use

Clothing does not fit, is not appropriate for the weather, or is overtly sexualized

Excess condoms, lubricant, lingerie, or sexual items

Frequent requests for linens and towels

Movement is monitored or restricted

Unaware of current or past whereabouts

Reporting suspected human trafficking:

For emergencies: Call 9-1-1 or #77

Virginia State Police Human Trafficking Tip Line

Text "VSP" to 847411 or scan the QR code (to the right) to report online.

If you think someone is being trafficked, you can help by reporting.

Gather information for law enforcement, including license plate numbers, descriptions of involved individuals, and folio information. Collect as much information as possible without risking anyone's safety.



Do not attempt to intervene or rescue.

Animal Safety

All animals need to be approached cautiously. Never assume a dog is friendly.

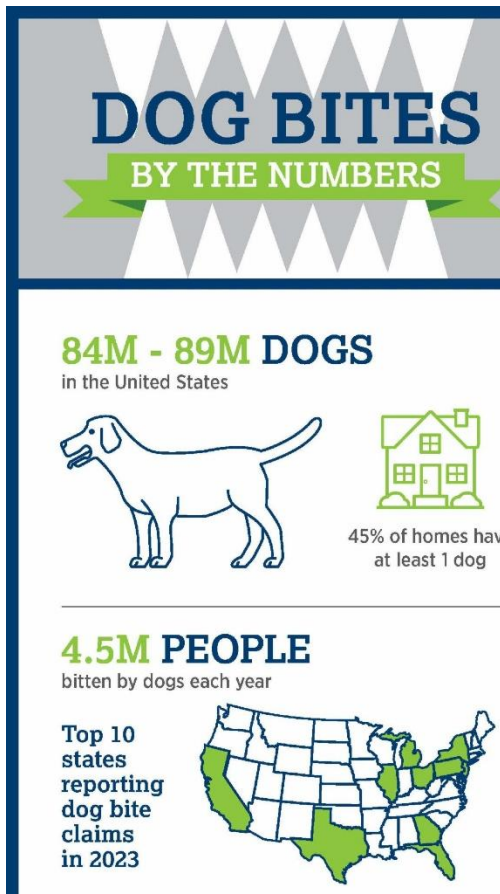
Prevent Rabies:

- Do not approach, feed or touch any animal that is behaving strangely
- Never touch or play with a bat
- Bat-proof your home: seal all holes or gaps where bats can enter
- Vaccinate livestock, dogs, and cats as appropriate

If you are exposed:

Immediately wash the wound or infected area with soap and water for 15 minutes and seek medical attention

Rabies is almost always fatal BUT 100% preventable.



CHILDREN

are the most common victims of dog bites and are far more likely to be severely injured

Pillars of dog bite prevention

1. Socializing your dog
2. Educating communities
3. Avoiding risky situations

WHAT'S THE \$\$\$\$?

Insurers paid out

\$1.12B

in liability claims related to dog bites and other dog-related injuries in 2023


Over the past decade (2013-2023), State Farm has paid over **\$1.5 BILLION** for dog-related injury claims.



Average cost for dog bite insurance claims in 2023 was

\$58,545

Dog bite claims increased by nearly 10% in 2023



ANY DOG CAN BITE

Educate yourself, your children & others about dog bite prevention at avma.org/DogBitePrevention

Do you get your water from a well?

Keep it Clean!



If you have a well, many things can contaminate your drinking water, such as a failing septic system. Test your well water regularly! Learn more at www.epa.gov/septic.



VERIFIABLE EMPLOYEE HEALTH

All permitted food facilities are required to document and maintain records for each employee showing they have been informed of the establishment's employee health reporting policy as per regulation 12VAC5-421-70 (15), (16). These records will be requested and reviewed during an inspection, please make sure they are readily available