Dealing with mice in your home

Links:
- What’s Bugging You Mice and Rats: https://nysipm.cornell.edu/whats-bugging-you/rodents/
- How to set a snap trap: https://youtu.be/EJswB6Pw9ZQ
- Tips for using snap traps: https://youtu.be/b8W-bt2wcgU
- Pest Exclusion page (Resources section with product selection advice): www.PestExclusion.org
- Mouse entry point video: https://youtu.be/HFk2jsGyysM

Questions:
Q: Do white-footed or deer mice have a further foraging distance? In dealing with brush piles outside or other potential rodent harborage, what kind of distance would they travel for food?
A: Yes, white-footed and deer mice have home ranges between 1/8th to ¾ of an acre, whereas house mice tend to forage 15 to 30 feet from their nest site to food sources. However, in both cases, foraging range can be larger or smaller depending on the availability and location of food and nest sites, as well as competition from other mice. Because home ranges can vary, the best recommendation would be to keep brush piles and other potential harborage (e.g., stacks of firewood) as far away from the home as possible. For more information about white-footed and deer mouse foraging ranges, see: https://cdnsciencepub.com/doi/abs/10.1139/z85-397.

Q: Does leaving garage doors open allow rodents to get into the home more easily?
A: The simple answer is yes. However, several factors influence this answer, including how pest proof the home is inside the garage, whether the closed garage door is actually pest proof, and the time of day garage doors are open.

- White-footed and/or deer mice can often find nest sites inside a garage – whether in cluttered corners, undisturbed shelves, or inside wall voids. Garage bays may not be rodent-proof, so once inside this space, rodents can likely find access into other parts of the home under doors, through utility openings or structural voids. Inside a garage there are many potential locations for mice to find harborage, and therefore many exclusion needs. The better approach would be to keep them out by keeping the door closed. This is especially important at dusk and early morning hours when rodents are active.

- There should be a tight fit where the garage door meets the ground, and there should be no gaps on either side of the door. One test for this is to stand inside the garage on a sunny day and see if light comes through any gaps at the floor or side of the door. Unfortunately, over time as buildings shift and soil settles, the garage door might not fit tightly against the ground. Pest proof “compression seals” are available to close these gaps, and there are also products that can be used to close gaps on the side of the garage door (rodent seals are available in big box stores). Keep in mind that compression seals designed to keep cold air out are not the same as pest proof compression seals.

- It is important for the rest of the house to be pest proof too. You can do you own inspection to find entry points by following these Exterior Inspection Instructions and by using the Exterior Inspection Form.
Q: Do house mice look for food in the same places in homes as field mice?
A: Not usually. House mice tend to live as close to people and pet food as possible. They may find a nest site under kitchen cabinets, in kitchen walls they access through plumbing openings, or even in back corners of cabinets. They feed on spilled food (in cabinets, associated with stoves and prep areas) and can chew into food packaging. Field mice (white-footed mice and deer mice) often feed on natural items from outdoors, such as acorns, seeds, insects and other arthropods. However, they will also feed on human and pet food if these are readily accessible. Field mice will also nest in all parts of the home, from basement to attic, making their nest sites harder to find as they are further way from food.

Q: What are the best products to help exclude mice from getting inside? Steel wool?
A: Please visit our Scientific Coalition on Pest Exclusion Website and view the “Material Selection” section. The links include detailed guides for material selection, as well as articles describing specific exclusion situations. One article that might be of interest is Pest Proofing Small Holes by Dr. Bobby Corrigan. This article describes the important distinction between caulks and sealants, the issues with foam sealants, and the different options for metal mesh plugs. Steel wool is not a good solution because it can rust over time, become brittle and lose its efficacy. There are copper mesh and stainless-steel fabric fillers available to plug small holes that will not break down over time.

What to do if stink bugs got inside?
Links: