



HOUSE MOUSE

RODENTIA
Family: Muridae
Genus: *Mus*
Species: musculus



Range: origins in Asia, found throughout the world now
Habitat: varied, in or near human habitation and open fields.
Niche: terrestrial, nocturnal, primarily herbivorous
Wild diet: any fruit or grain from plants
Zoo diet:
Life Span: (Wild) 20 months
(Captivity) 3 years
Sexual dimorphism: none
Location in SF Zoo: Children's Zoo

APPEARANCE & PHYSICAL ADAPTATIONS:

Mice are of the order Rodentia. They vary in color from white to grey, and light brown to black. They have short hair and a light belly. They have large ears and a long tail. Mice have poor eyesight but a keen sense of hearing, and rely especially on their sense of smell to locate food and avoid predators. As primarily nocturnal animals, house mice have little or no color vision. They have 16 teeth: 4 incisor and 12 molars. The large ever-growing and rootless incisors are characteristic of the rodent. These chisel-like teeth allow the rodent to cut and chop its food, which can then be passed back to the molars. Because their incisors grow continually, rodents must gnaw continually to keep them the proper length.

House mice usually run, walk, or stand on all fours, but when eating, fighting, or orienting themselves, they stand only on the hind legs, supported by the tail. When they run, the horizontal tail serves for balance; the end stands up vertically, unless the mouse is frightened. Mice are good jumpers, climbers, and swimmers.

Weight: .4 - .9 oz.

HRL: 3.0–3.9 in.

TL: 2.0–3.9 in.

STATUS & CONSERVATION

Common throughout the world. House mice thrive under a variety of conditions. House mice are a popular animal pet and they are by far the most commonly used laboratory animals.

COMMUNICATION AND OTHER BEHAVIOR

The voice is a high-pitched squeak. Male house mice court females by emitting characteristic ultrasonic calls in the 30 kHz–110 kHz range. Males can be induced to emit these calls by female pheromones.

Mice are territorial, and one dominant male usually lives together with several females and young.

They will eat their droppings to acquire nutrients produced by bacteria in their intestines. House mice, like most other rodents, do not vomit.

COURTSHIP AND YOUNG

Following copulation, female mice will normally develop a vaginal plug, which prevents further copulation. This plug stays in place for some 24 hours. Altricial young; pups are hairless, and have closed eyelids and ears.

Estrous: Polyestrous	
Gestation: 20 days	Sexual Maturity: 50 days
# of Mammae: 4 – 5 pairs	Weaning Age: 3 weeks
# of Young: 5 – 6 (5 – 10 litters/year)	Weight at birth: 0.5–1.5 g (0.018 – 0.053 oz)

MISCELLANEOUS

The House mouse was originally native to Asia and humans then introduced them all over the world. Mice play an important role in the food web as mice are a staple in the diet of many small carnivores.

Sources:

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Walker's Mammal's of the World Vol II © 1992 Ronald M. Norwalk, Johns Hopkins University Press, p 1604 -1608.

<http://www.waza.org/en/zoo/visit-the-zoo/rodents-and-hares/mus-musculus>

http://www.nsrl.ttu.edu/tmot1/mus_musc.htm

<http://www.iucnredlist.org/apps/redlist/details/13972/0>