

Harvest Mouse



Harvest Mice can be found almost anywhere tall grass, reed or sedge species are present throughout the year; including marshes, reedbeds, rough grassland, hedgerows, bramble patches, gardens, and even road verges.

The best way to survey for harvest mice is by searching for abandoned summer nests, as the harvest mouse is the only British mouse to build nests of woven grass well above ground.

Identifying Nests

- Nests are generally found on stalks at least 30cm above ground and up to a metre in tall reeds
- The two species of grass most favoured by harvest mice are Cock's-foot and Reed Canary-grass, however any stiff leaved grass may be used for nest building
- Harvest Mice do not favour thin grasses, short grasses, or those with stems too weak to support their nests
- If the nest is built in grasses which form tussocks, for example Cock's-foot or Tufted Hair-grass, the nest is usually located on top of the tussock between the flowering stems, or under overhanging leaves. In this case, the nest will only be about 10cm above the ground
- Nests can vary in size. They are typically around 10cm in diameter for breeding nests and 5cm for non-breeding nests
- Nests are built from the leaves of grasses which have been shredded lengthways into 1-2mm wide, with the strips remaining joined at the base of the leaf. The strips are then woven together to form the framework of the nest. The nest is lined by pulling further grasses through the wall until it is densely woven without leaving an obvious entrance
- Nests are most easiest to spot in winter when the surrounding vegetation dies back



How to Help Harvest Mice

- Create suitable habitat – allow corridors of tall tussocky grassland to develop alongside hedgerows
- Avoid cutting areas of vegetation where nests have been found until the autumn. If you have to cut in summer leave areas of tall vegetation as refuges and check for nests before you cut
- Provide a home for Harvest Mice – a tennis ball with an entrance hole cut in it attached to a cane placed amongst tall grass makes an ideal artificial nest

For further information please contact: