

Mouse plague in Australia forces prison to close

25th June, 2021



Millions of mice have been creating havoc in Australia. The state of New South Wales is suffering from its worst mouse plague in decades. The mouse population started growing on farms in spring last year because of a bumper wheat harvest. The

rodents have been causing farmers a major headache for over a year. The plague has now caused problems for a prison. The Wellington Correctional Centre, about 350km west of Sydney, has been forced to evacuate. Up to 200 staff and 420 prisoners have been transferred to other jails in the region because of health and safety reasons. It will take 10 days for the prison to be cleaned and for repairs to electric cables and woodwork to be carried out.

Mice have been causing damage to buildings throughout the region. Their droppings have become a health hazard that has cost hundreds of thousands of dollars to clean up. In addition, they have chewed through electrical wiring, which has become a danger to property and human life. Prisons spokesperson Peter Severin spoke about the cleaning and repair operations at Wellington. He said: "The health, safety and wellbeing of staff and inmates is our number one priority, so it's important for us to act now to carry out the vital repair work....We need to take this step now to ensure the site is thoroughly cleaned and infrastructure is repaired." Staff will also look at ways to protect against plagues in the future.

Sources: canberratimes.com / smh.co.au / abc.net.au

Writing

We should do more to cut the numbers of pests like mice. Discuss.

Chat

Talk about these words from the article.

millions / havoc / plague / decades / wheat / harvest / prison / evacuate / cables / damage / health hazard / thousands / repair / wellbeing / vital / infrastructure / future

True / False

- 1) The article says 10 million mice are creating havoc in Australia. T / F
- 2) The numbers of mice increased due to the production of lots of wheat. T / F
- 3) The mice plague forced the permanent closure of a prison near Sydney. T / F
- 4) It will take less than two weeks to repair the prison's electric cables. T / F
- 5) It is costing millions of dollars to deal with mice droppings. T / F
- 6) Millions of mice died after chewing through electrical wiring. T / F
- 7) The wellbeing of staff is the prison's top priority. T / F
- 8) Staff are looking at ways to deal with future mouse plagues. T / F

Synonym Match

(The words in **bold** are from the news article.)

- | | |
|-----------------------|--------------|
| 1. havoc | a. crop |
| 2. decade | b. hazard |
| 3. harvest | c. area |
| 4. prison | d. gnawed |
| 5. transferred | e. ten years |
| 6. region | f. safeguard |
| 7. chewed | g. moved |
| 8. danger | h. chaos |
| 9. vital | i. jail |
| 10. protect | j. essential |

Discussion – Student A

- a) What do you think of mice?
- b) What would you do if you saw thousands of mice?
- c) What good do mice do?
- d) What headaches do mice cause farmers?
- e) What problems could mice cause a prison?
- f) Why are mice called pests?
- g) What other things cause farmers headaches?
- h) What things in life cause you headaches?

Phrase Match

- | | |
|--|--------------------------|
| 1. Millions of mice have been creating | a. evacuate |
| 2. causing farmers a major | b. a health hazard |
| 3. forced to | c. cables |
| 4. because of health and | d. throughout the region |
| 5. repairs to electric | e. headache |
| 6. causing damage to buildings | f. priority |
| 7. Their droppings have become | g. havoc in Australia |
| 8. a danger to property | h. wellbeing of staff |
| 9. The health, safety and | i. safety reasons |
| 10. our number one | j. and human life |

Discussion – Student B

- What do you think about what you read?
- Why are some people afraid of mice?
- Have you ever had mice in your house?
- What is the best way to get rid of mice in your house?
- How could mice affect the wellbeing of people?
- Do mice make good pets?
- How can we stop plagues of mice in the future?
- What questions would you like to ask the head of the prison?

Spelling

- mice have been creating hoavc
- its worst mouse plague in saeddec
- because of a bumper wheat svrahte
- forced to tcueaaev
- other jails in the rgnioe
- repairs to electric cslaeb
- a health arzahd
- they have wheced through electrical wiring
- a danger to ysteropp
- The health, safety and bllgnewei of staff
- carry out the lvtia repair work
- ensure the site is ohghuytolr cleaned

Answers – Synonym Match

1. h	2. e	3. a	4. i	5. g
6. c	7. d	8. b	9. j	10. f

Role Play

Role A – Mice

You think mice are the most interesting rodents. Tell the others three reasons why. Tell them why their rodents aren't as interesting. Also, tell the others which is the least interesting of these (and why): squirrels, hamsters or beavers.

Role B – Squirrels

You think squirrels are the most interesting rodents. Tell the others three reasons why. Tell them why their rodents aren't as interesting. Also, tell the others which is the least interesting of these (and why): mice, hamsters or beavers.

Role C – Hamsters

You think hamsters are the most interesting rodents. Tell the others three reasons why. Tell them why their rodents aren't as interesting. Also, tell the others which is the least interesting of these (and why): squirrels, mice or beavers.

Role D – Beavers

You think beavers are the most interesting rodents. Tell the others three reasons why. Tell them why their rodents aren't as interesting. Also, tell the others which is the least interesting of these (and why): squirrels, hamsters or mice.

Speaking – Rodents

Rank these with your partner. Put the most interesting rodents at the top. Change partners often and share your rankings.

- | | |
|----------------|-------------|
| • Guinea pigs | • Mice |
| • Prairie dogs | • Rats |
| • Porcupines | • Squirrels |
| • Hamsters | • Beavers |

Answers – True False

1 F	2 T	3 F	4 T	5 F	6 F	7 T	8 T
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Answers to Phrase Match and Spelling are in the text.