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U. S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE  
OFFICE OF INFORMATION  
PRESS SERVICE



WASHINGTON, D. C.

Release - Immediate

January 11, 1933.

HEAVY SNOWS THREATEN  
RODENT DAMAGE TO TREES

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Deep snows and low temperatures in the fruit belt of the Eastern States threaten damage to fruit trees by field mice and rabbits, say rodent-control specialists of the Biological Survey, U. S. Department of Agriculture.

When snow and ice cover the grass and other surface vegetation, rabbits find the bark of trees and brush the most acceptable food available. Pine mice are unable to extend their feeding burrows through the hard frozen ground, and at such times they gnaw the roots of certain species of trees. Both mice and rabbits seem to prefer apple bark, but they also gnaw the bark of peach, cherry, plum, and other fruit trees. Younger trees provide choicer morsels, but no tree is too old to supply these rodents with succulent cambium layer and inner bark.

Every orchardist, the Biological Survey advises, should watch his trees carefully when snow is deep in the orchard and if necessary he should protect the trees by wrapping them with woven wire netting, wood veneer, paper, corn stalks, or some similar material. Repellent washes also afford some protection.

Pine mouse damage occurs below the surface of the ground, and orchardists should therefore be especially careful to detect any sign of this rodent's work. They should protect injured trees from drying out by mounding up soil to cover the injury, or by covering the injury with liquid grafting wax. To save badly damaged or completely girdled trees, orchardists will have to do bridge grafting early in the spring. Scions for this purpose should be cut immediately, however, and should be held in cold storage until time for the grafting.

Readers wanting further information should consult Department of Agriculture publications: Farmers' Bulletin 1397-F, Mouse Control in Field and Orchard; Farmers' Bulletin 702-F, Cottontail Rabbits in Relation to Trees and Crops; or Farmers' Bulletin 1369-F, Bridge Grafting. These can be obtained at five cents each from the Superintendent of Documents, Washington, D.C.

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