

THE ARTICLE

From <https://breakingnewsenglish.com/2106/210625-mouse-plague.html>

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: <https://www.canberratimes.com.au/story/7307607/nsw-jail-evacuated-because-of-mice-plague/>
<https://www.smh.com.au/environment/sustainability/everywhere-s-bad-farmers-eye-long-campaign-against-mouse-plague-20210607-p57y0r.html>
<https://www.abc.net.au/news/rural/2021-06-23/bromadiolone-mouse-plague-poison-rejected-for-use/100218864>

VOCABULARY MATCHING

Paragraph 1

- | | |
|---------------|--|
| 1. havoc | a. All of the crops grown and gathered in a season. |
| 2. decade | b. Widespread destruction. |
| 3. population | c. All the people of a particular town, area, or country. |
| 4. harvest | d. Remove someone from a place of danger to a safe place. |
| 5. rodent | e. A thick rope of wire or nonmetallic fiber, usually used for construction, tying up ships, and towing cars, or for transporting electricity. |
| 6. evacuate | f. A period of ten years. |
| 7. cable | g. A mammal that includes rats, mice, squirrels, hamsters, etc. with strong, large front teeth. |

Paragraph 2

- | | |
|----------------|---|
| 8. throughout | h. Buildings and land that belong to someone. |
| 9. droppings | i. In a way that covers every detail. |
| 10. chew | j. Totally necessary or important; essential. |
| 11. property | k. Bite at something non-stop. |
| 12. wellbeing | l. The state of being comfortable, healthy, or happy. |
| 13. vital | m. In every part of. |
| 14. thoroughly | n. The solid waste of animals, such as mice, sheep, birds, and insects. |

BEFORE READING / LISTENING

From <https://breakingnewsenglish.com/2106/210625-mouse-plague.html>

1. TRUE / FALSE: Read the headline. Guess if a-h below are true (T) or false (F).

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**

2. 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 |

3. PHRASE MATCH: (Sometimes more than one choice is possible.)

- | | |
|--|--------------------------|
| 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 |

COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS

From <https://breakingnewsenglish.com/2106/210625-mouse-plague.html>

1. What Australian state is the mice plague in?
2. What was there a bumper harvest of?
3. How far west of Sydney is the prison in the article?
4. How many prisoners were transferred to other prisons?
5. How long will the cleaning of the prison take?
6. What does the article say is a health hazard?
7. What have mice chewed through?
8. Who is Peter Severin?
9. Who is the number one priority of the prison?
10. What will prison staff hope to safeguard against in the future?

MICE DISCUSSION

STUDENT A's QUESTIONS (Do not show these to student B)

1. What did you think when you read the headline?
2. What images are in your mind when you hear the word 'mouse'?
3. What do you think of mice?
4. What would you do if you saw thousands of mice?
5. What good do mice do?
6. What headaches do mice cause farmers?
7. What problems could mice cause a prison?
8. Why are mice called pests?
9. What other things cause farmers headaches?
10. What things in life cause you headaches?

Mouse plague in Australia forces prison to close – 25th June, 2021
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MICE DISCUSSION

STUDENT B's QUESTIONS (Do not show these to student A)

11. Did you like reading this article? Why/not?
12. What do you think of when you hear the word 'plague'?
13. What do you think about what you read?
14. Why are some people afraid of mice?
15. Have you ever had mice in your house?
16. What is the best way to get rid of mice in your house?
17. How could mice affect the wellbeing of people?
18. Do mice make good pets?
19. How can we stop plagues of mice in the future?
20. What questions would you like to ask the head of the prison?