Preventing rats and mice from entering grain stores

Recognize the problem
Rats and mice can cause damage to stored maize. They eat the grains, and leave their droppings, urine and hair which lowers the grain quality and can also be a health hazard.

Background
Rats and mice have high birth rates. When plenty of food and water is available, their populations can rapidly grow leading to high numbers. Rats are good climbers, but cannot overcome overhanging hindrances. To stop rats and mice from entering maize stores, the grains must be raised off the ground on a covered platform. In addition, rat guards must be placed to prevent rats and mice from climbing up the poles.

Management
- The maize store is raised and placed on wooden poles.
- Wooden poles are well-inserted into the ground to stabilise the storage.
- Poles need to be long enough so that the tops are at least 4 feet (1.2 m) from the ground after burying.
- Use poles that are not easily attacked by termites.
- The rat guards are made out of iron sheets, and bent to form a cone shape.
- The rat guards should be at least 0.5 ft in radius (0.15 m) and are fixed to the poles by nailing them tightly.
- The guards are attached to the poles 3-4 feet above the ground. Then, the guards are too high for the rats and mice to jump over. The cone shape and slippery surface of the iron stop the animals from climbing around into the maize store.
- The maize cobs are filled from the top using a ladder.
- The store is covered with available materials such as local grasses or aluminium sheets or similar. The roof is tightly attached to the floor to prevent other animals, thieves and birds from entering. Farmers should check the guards frequently to ensure that they are not damaged and still functioning.

Scientific name(s) > Rattus rattus

The recommendations in this factsheet are relevant to: Ghana, Kenya, Tanzania, Uganda