Building A Better Mousetrap, Version 1.1

By R. G. Sparber

Here in Phoenix, AZ, having a swimming pool is almost a necessity. I define "hot" as above 115°F. Without being able to be in my pool, it might as well be -115°F outside. I'm staying in the house!

So it was becoming a very annoying problem when I pulled up to four drowned mice from my pool each week. One particularly grim morning there were two dead mice in my skimmer and one in my in-line filter. Can't let them rot in there as you can imagine.

Hence my truly first world problem: how do I stop mice from turning up dead in my pool?

Apart from erecting tiny nets or posting tiny "danger" signs, I was at a loss for a few weeks. Then I remember an important insight from one of my professor:

"The answers are easy. The questions are hard."

So what was the right question? I had to ask myself ***why*** the mice were floating in my pool. They were thirsty! Duh.

I scooped some water out of the pool and filled a shallow dish on the pool deck. That worked most of the time but I did get a drowned mouse once in a while.

Time for another question: Why would a mouse fall into the pool rather than drink from the dish? The obvious answer was that the two water sources smelled the same so there was no advantage, as far as the mouse was concerned, going for the dish.

Now, I think it is reasonable to assume that mice, like people, prefer water that doesn't have a strong chemical smell. So why not fill the dish with tap water?

In the first week, I fished one mouse out of the pool. It has now been 2 weeks without a single drowned mouse. So maybe my mouse "trap" is working.

The last challenge was keeping that dish full of water. The water level must be kept low enough that mice don't start drowning in it. Furthermore, water evaporates quickly around here. So having to fill a shallow pan every day gets old.

A quick search of the Internet turned up plenty of products that provide water to pets. The idea was good but I'm not about to buy anything.

My solution involved a 2 liter polycarbonate bottle and a shallow metal pan. The bottle has a ¼ inch hole drilled in the side right near the bottom.

I cover the hole with my finger, fill up the bottle, and screw on the top. Then I place the bottle in the pan.

As long as the water in the pan covers the hole, no water flows out the bottle. When the hole is uncovered, water flows until the hole is again under water.

With about ¼ inch of water in the pan, mice can safely drink. A full bottle lasts about a week.

There will always be that one really stupid mouse that falls into my pool. But I am going to declare success and move on to my next adventure.

Update: It has now been 2 weeks and we have not fished a single mouse out of the pool. It have been consistently above 100°F every day yet I've only needed to fill the bottle about once a week.

I welcome your comments and questions.

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