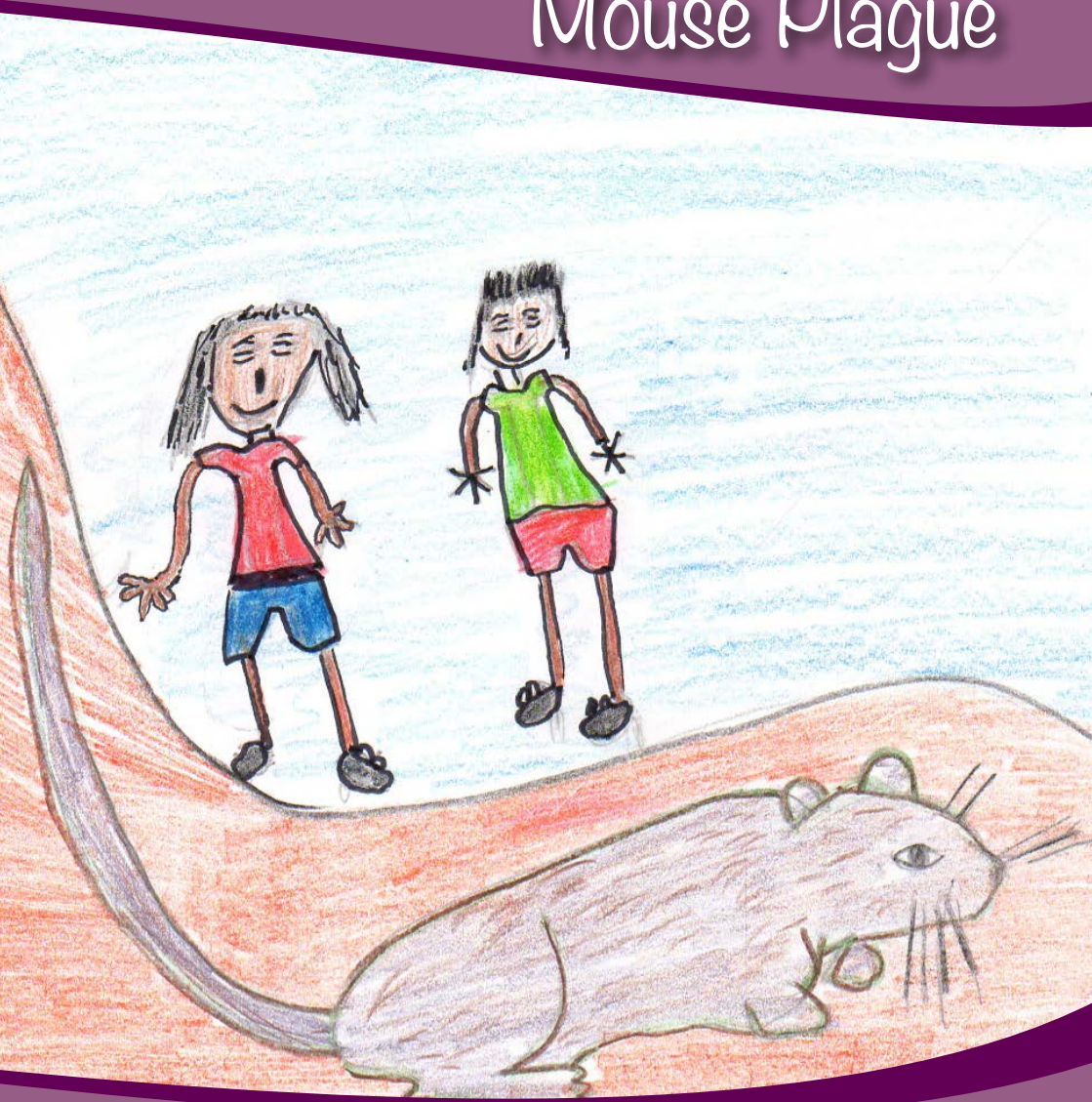


The Twins and the Mouse Plague



Chloe Gosling and Billie-jo Trudgett
Euchareena Public School



Enviro-Stories

Enviro-Stories is an innovative literacy education program that inspires learning about natural resource and catchment management issues. Developed by PeeKdesigns, this program provides students with an opportunity to publish their own stories that have been written for other kids to support learning about their local area.

www.envirostories.com.au

Central West Local Land Services

The Central West Local Land Services region is home to around 110,000 people and covers the central west slopes region around Grenfell, Forbes and Wellington to the western plains of Nyngan and Coonamble.

www.lls.nsw.gov.au/centralwest

Central Tablelands Local Land Services

The Central Tablelands Local Land Services region is located in central New South Wales and covers an area of approximately 31,365 km². It includes the major towns of Bathurst, Blayney, Cowra, Lithgow, Molong, Mudgee, Oberon and Orange.

www.lls.nsw.gov.au/centraltablelands

Invasive Animals CRC

The Invasive Animals Cooperative Research Centre (CRC) is Australia's largest integrated invasive animal research program. The Invasive Animals CRC creates new technologies and integrated strategies to reduce the impact of invasive animals on Australia's economy, environment and people.

www.invasiveanimals.com | www.pestsmart.org.au

The Twins and the Mouse Plague

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- Billy's Great Escape
- Carl the Carp
- Farmer Bob and the Red Fox
- Just Too Feral for Meadow Flat
- Nigel the Nasty Rabbit
- Rabbits Running Rife
- Some Help for Harry
- The Invasion
- The Twins and the Mouse Plague
- Who got the Chickens?

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Samantha and Luke were twins. They lived in a farmhouse on a property named 'Gum Flat'. Their dad grew corn and wheat crops, and their mum had a vegetable and flower garden.

Luke woke up early one morning and, after getting dressed, went to feed his mice. Billy was a white mouse and Jill was black. Luke cut up apple and banana and gave them some mice pellets.

Hiding under the table was a little grey house mouse, also looking for food.

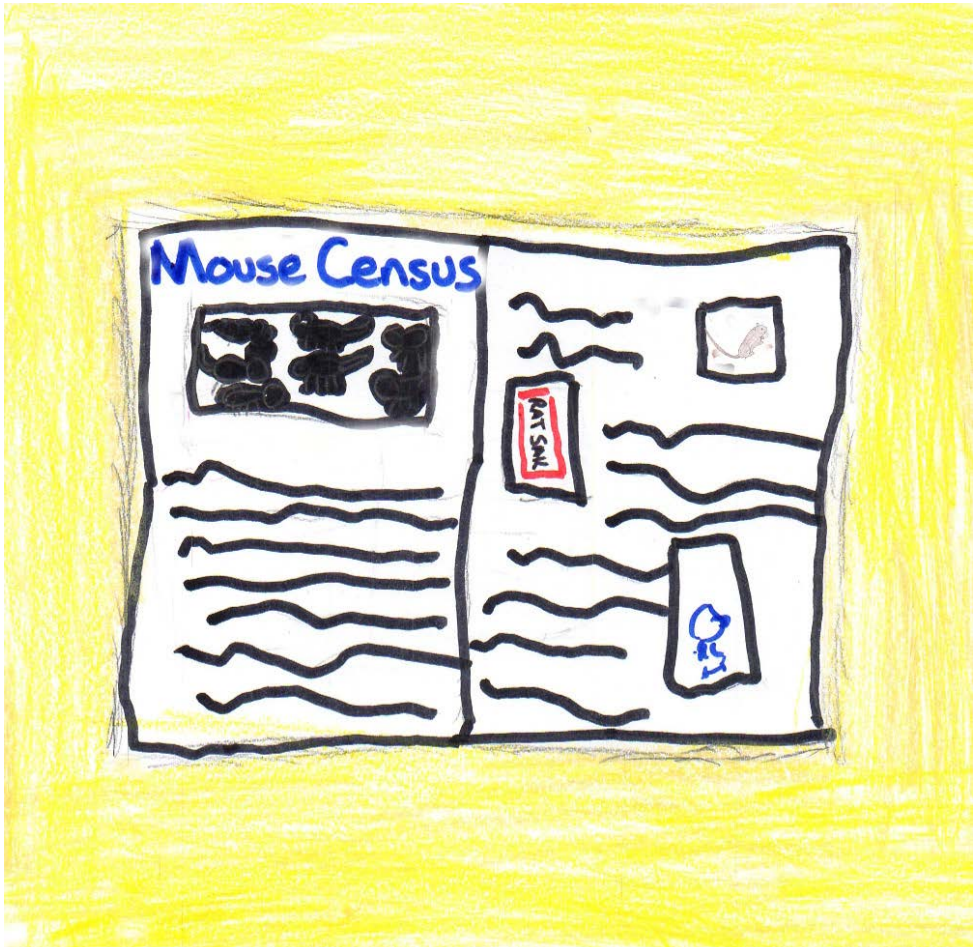




Suddenly, Mum spied it and screamed like a little girl.

“Aaagh!” she yelled and jumped on a chair. “I hate mice. They get into my cupboards and eat our food and leave droppings everywhere.”

Dad jumped up with his hands on his hips and said, “Yeah, remember last year they even ate through the TV cords.”



The following morning Dad was reading the paper.

“Mmmm,” he said. “This report is talking about a mouse census being undertaken.”

“What’s a mouse census?” asked Sam.

“It’s to see how many feral mice are in our crops,” replied Dad.

"Well, my mice are really cute," Luke exclaimed.
"What is a feral mouse?"

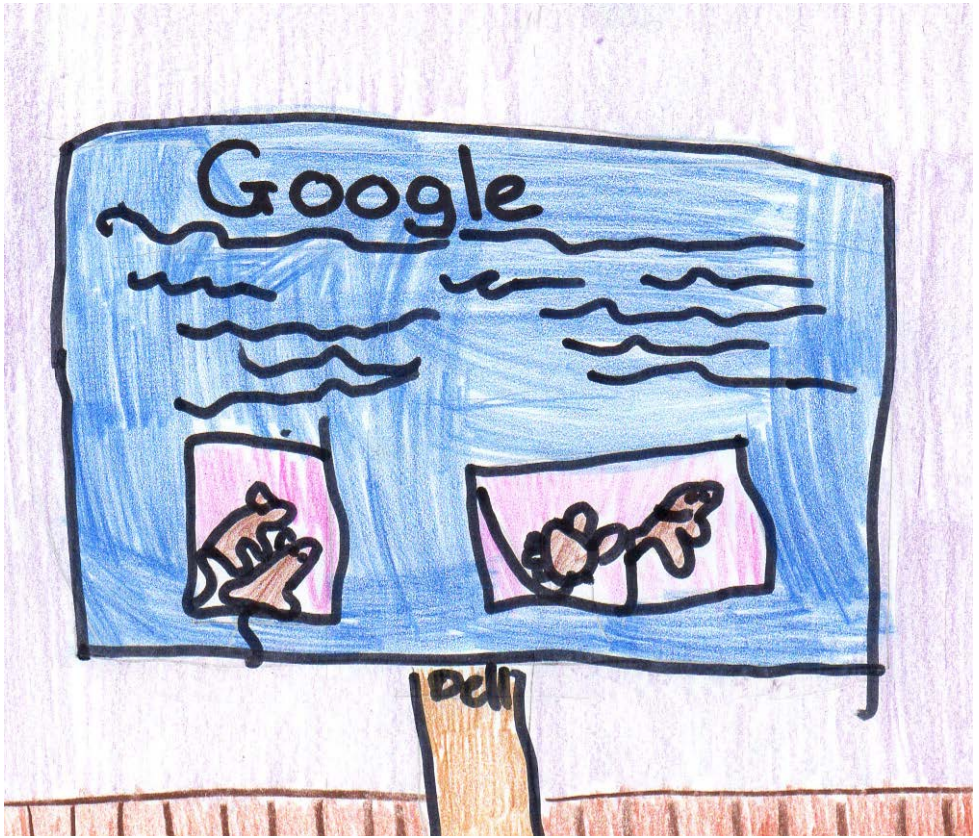
Dad smiled and said, "It's a mouse that is not a pet. Nobody wants them and they can breed quickly. Too many mice cause damage to our environment as they can eat through anything."



“How can they possibly count the mice?” asked Luke.

“Well, special cards soaked in canola oil are placed in the field. Mouse chew at them, giving an idea of the number of mice in the field. Knowing the number of mice helps farmers and the authorities in preventing mice plagues.”





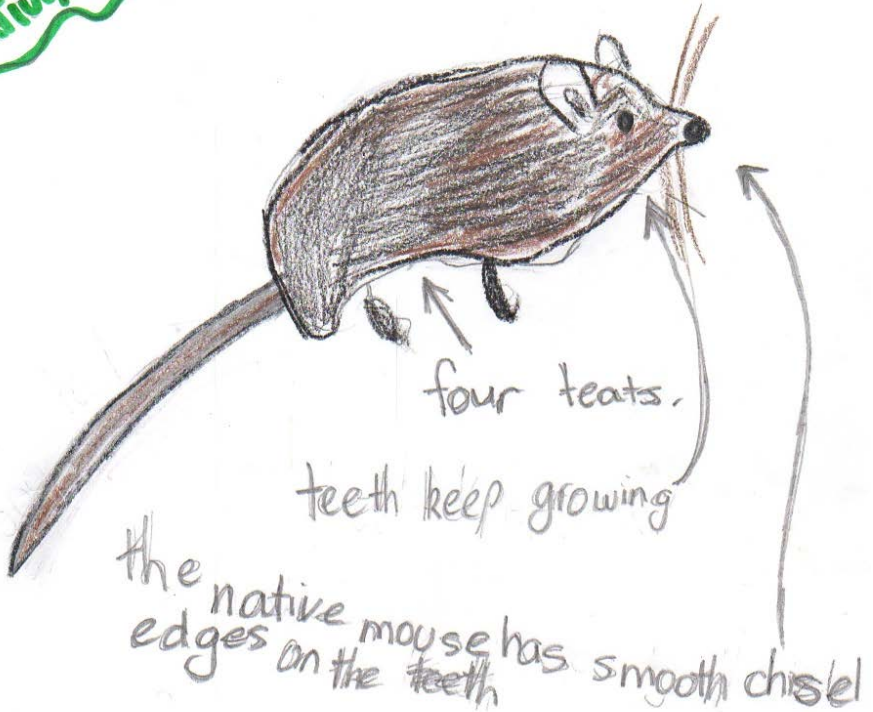
“But do we have mice that are native to Australia?” Sam asked.

“Yes,” said Mum. “But they are native and don’t become pests,” she added. “In fact, feral mice can hurt our native mice by eating all their food and spreading disease.”

“What is the difference between native and feral mice?” Luke asked.

“Let’s Google it and find out,” suggested Mum.

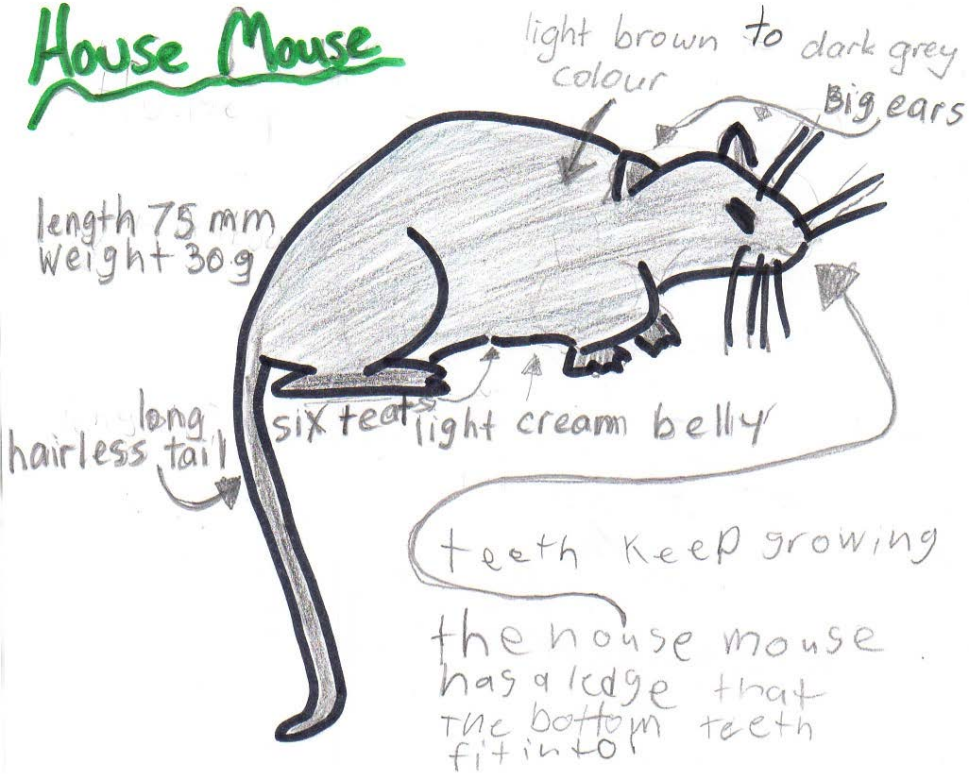
Native mouse



Native mice are good for the environment. When they eat the native grasses and mushrooms, they poo out the seeds and spores resulting in more native vegetation growing in our bushland areas.

In some spots around Australia, they are in danger of dying out because humans and feral animals are ruining their habitat. Feral cats and feral foxes prey on them, wiping them out of some areas. This can affect other native animals like snakes, owls and quolls who also eat them.

House Mouse



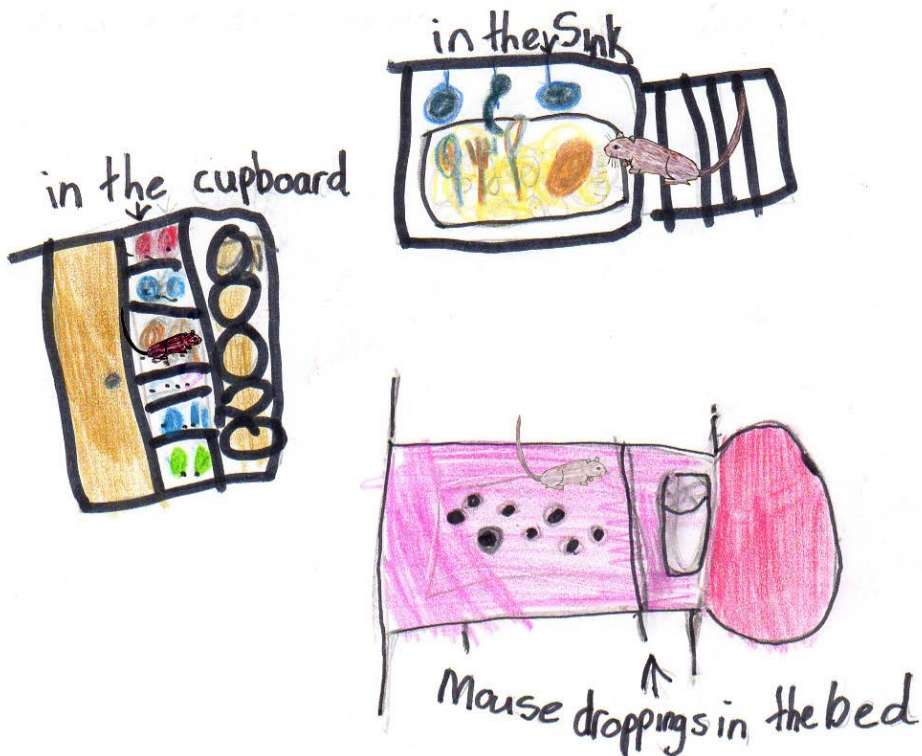
The house mouse is an introduced species. They like to live in fields and wooded areas, but when it is cold they come into people's houses. We know they are there because they leave droppings and build nests.

Mice can have eight litters a year with six babies in each litter. That is 48 babies per female, per year!



The following week, Grandma Kathleen came to stay. She lived out in western NSW. The twins excitedly showed her their research about mice.

"I remember...", said Grandma, thinking about her younger days. "I remember many mice plagues, but one was really terrible."



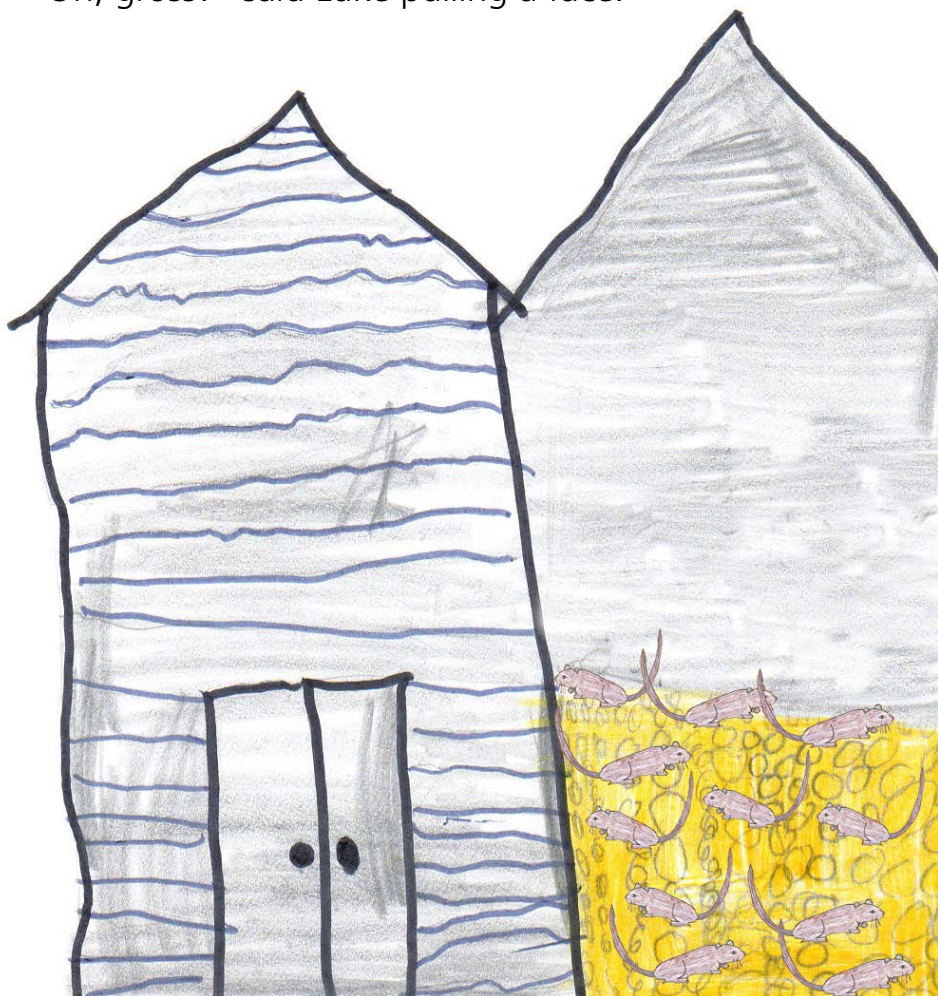
“Tell us! What was it like?” the twins begged her.

“There were so many mice that I could even see them when I was driving. Thousands of mice were running across the roads, travelling from crop to crop and house to house eating everything in their path.” Grandma Kathleen told them. “They were everywhere in the houses; they were in the food cupboards, in with the towels and sheets and sometimes they even they left droppings in your bed.”

“Yuk!” exclaimed Sam and Luke in unison.

“One day I was watching TV and it suddenly went out. Guess what? Those dirty mice had chewed right through the cord. I even found them in the stove. Ewww! Cooked mice...I will never forget the smell,” Grandma Kathleen reminisced. “It was even worse in the wheat silos. There were hundreds of thousands of them. The grain looked like it was alive!”

“Oh, gross!” said Luke pulling a face.



“They did so much damage to the crops. They affected our whole region,” Gran continued.

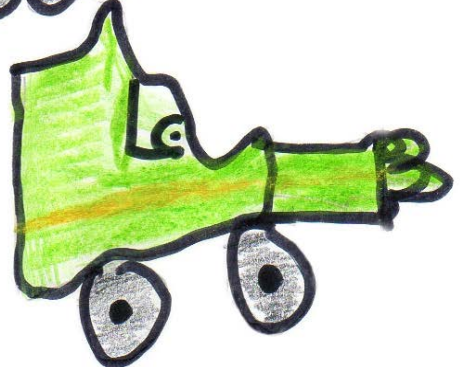
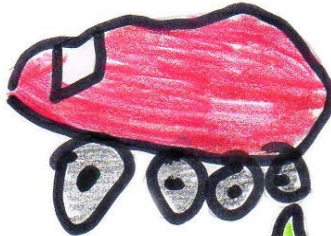
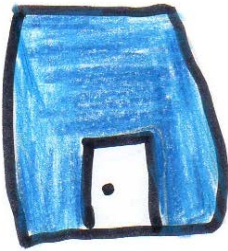
“How do they damage the crops? They are so little,” cried Sam.

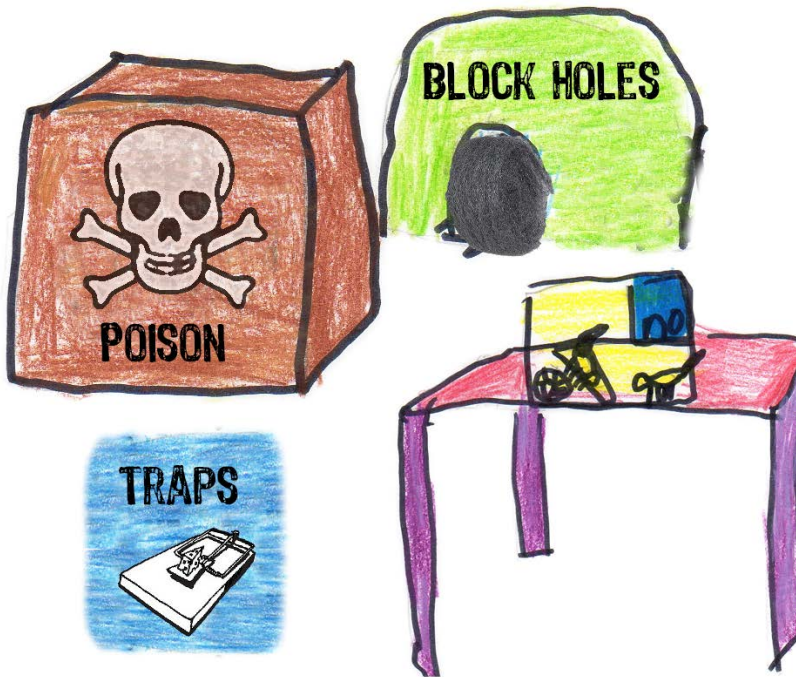
Grandma sighed. “They ate through three million hectares of crops in New South Wales. Feral mice chew part of the stalk of wheat, it falls over and they eat the delicious head of the wheat. They also ate through the seed pods in the canola as well.”



Luke asked, "What causes a mouse plague?"

"When there is a lot of food around, and a mild winter does not kill off the mice, it can lead to a mouse plague in the spring," said Dad. "If the mice population is not controlled, they become a massive pest to farmers. Not only do they eat the crops and grain stores, but they can sometimes eat through rubber and electrical cords causing damage to buildings, cars and farm equipment."





“What can be done to stop them?” the twins asked.

“Just be on watch for them, and bait them before there is too many,” sighed Dad. “In the house, block up holes and don’t leave food around.”

“If the numbers of mice get too big, then it is important that the whole community has to work together to try and control them,” added Grandma Kathleen.

Looking at his pet mice Luke said, “It is hard to believe that these little creatures could do so much damage. I will be making very sure that my mice do not escape and cause a problem!”



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Euchareena Public School, Grade 3 & 4 2015

