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Shortgrass Country

by Monte Noelke

Last Spring, when I was away on a trip, mice took charge of my house. Before was able to convince them I was the landlord around here, I had over \$17 tied up in spring traps and dry bait stations and had narrowly escaped losing my life.

The wiliest of the lot was the one that nearly did me in. An old partner of mine had supplied me with a bag of pellets that he claimed were the best prescription going of rodent control. But nothing was working on this cagey pest.

I was filing down the triggers on my traps and making blind sets in the coffee grounds in the garbage pail. The moment of truth arrived the morning I found a tablespoon of pellets in a cereal box.

I was stunned. The green pellets looked hideous scattered among the flakes. There was no doubt that it was up against a killer. House mice don't have the inclinations of pack rats. They take what they want and leave a string of black scat to intimidate the housekeeper.

By nightfall I'd made a plan. All the traps were scrubbed and dipped in the dregs of the garbage can. Small slivers of rancid bacon were tied on the triggers with a find silk thread. On his main trail, I put a gray mouse

fishing lure with the hooks removed as a decoy to distract him.

Shortly after I'd retired, I heard a resounding snap in the kitchen. The evidence showed that he'd been traipsing around my decoy and foolishly backed into a trap.

Lots of ol' three-toes coyotes and one-eyed foxes have tormented trappers into an early grave. However, this must be the first varmint to try to strike back.