



Soy-based diet may be nice for mice, but not for car owners

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Mice, rats and other rodents like to snuggle up inside vehicle engines as the weather gets colder, and while they're staying warm, some apparently are finding a snack to munch on.

"The mechanic had noticed some definite mouse damage, that there were some wires chewed," said Lisa Barrett, who found that mice had chewed through enough wiring that her truck wouldn't start.

The repairs cost Barrett more than \$400.

"If your car sits in the street or garage for a while, it's a good idea to often check under the hood for rodent damage," said Jon Linkov, deputy automotive editor at Consumer Reports. "If you do spot some, you can use rodent tape to install over the damaged wires to protect from future damage. Also, if you do see an area where rodents can come in such as a ventilation area, you can ask your mechanic to install wire mesh."

Some owners of Toyota and Honda vehicles have filed class-action lawsuits, alleging that the vehicles are defective because the soy-based materials used to cover wiring attracts rodents. The lawsuits demand the companies cover the cost of repairs.

To help combat the problem, Honda now sells rodent-deterrent tape treated with spicy capsaicin, the active component in chili peppers. The lawsuits claim selling the tape is an acknowledgement of the defective nature of soy-based material.

In statements to Consumer Reports, Toyota and Honda said there is no evidence indicating that substances used for wiring cause rodents to chew through them. A Honda spokesman went further, saying it's a long established fact that rodents are drawn to chew on wires, whether in cars or in homes.