



## Getting rid of rats from your home



The common or brown rat can carry a wide range of diseases and parasites that are potentially harmful to both people and livestock. It can also cause considerable damage through gnawing and burrowing. **If you suspect that there is a rat in your home or garden, it is important to take action quickly.**

### Identifying a rat problem

The brown rat is generally brown or greyish-brown in colour becoming paler on the underside. It measures between 12.5 inches and 17 inches (32 cm to 43 cm) from nose to tail. It has a blunt muzzle, and very sharp teeth. The tail is long and largely hairless, the small close-set naked ears are prominent and the eyes are relatively small.

Rat droppings are often found near available food sources are the most common indication of an infestation. Rat droppings are torpedo shaped and measure up to 19 mm ( $\frac{3}{4}$  inch) long. Evidence of gnawing, rub marks, tracks, burrows, nests, and damage to stored products are indications of the extent of an infestation.

### Problems caused by rats

Of the diseases carried by rats in the United Kingdom, the potentially fatal Leptospirosis or Weils Disease is the most well known, with some 15 to 30 per cent of rats likely to be carriers. As a result, infested areas should be considered a source of this disease. The bacteria are excreted in rat urine and are passed on when humans come into contact with contaminated surfaces. Rat contamination of foodstuffs or food contact surfaces is unacceptable.

The costs of repairing damage caused by rats can also be high. Containers, packaging, insulation and many other materials are vulnerable to their gnawing activities. There is a significant risk of fire and electrocution as a result of damage to electrical cables and wiring and water damage can result if plastic water tanks are chewed.

### They're Not My Problem

The Prevention of Damage by Pests Act 1949 requires all the owners of land or building, and those who occupy them to take action to control rat numbers if they find them at their property. The borough council can help if the problem is on someone else's property, but will require you to also play your part.

### How to reduce the risk of rats in and around your home

Rats may be discouraged and infestations prevented by improving hygiene and by blocking access points to your home. Prevention is always the best policy.

- store food carefully so they do not have easy access to food sources.
- think carefully about how you feed pets or wild birds – so that rats can not take advantage of this food
- block any holes in air vents or around piping etc. – check first with a gas engineer if you have gas appliances
- attach brush strips to the bottom of doors

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- keep outer doors closed particularly in autumn. Keep areas around wheeled bins and compost bins tidy.

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## Controlling rats

Before attempting to deal with a rodent problem it is essential to carry out a survey to identify where rats are living, feeding and drinking and the routes they take between these areas. Look for:

- holes and burrows
- runs and tracks
- droppings
- damage
- footprints
- other signs such as sightings or a musky smell

Find the holes rats are using (this can be done by blocking any holes with newspaper (or similar) and coming back 24 hours later to see which holes have been reopened). Repair any holes which could let them get into your property.

Wherever possible you should try to resolve the problem by:

- Denial of Food & Water – store waste in bins with tight fitting lids. Make sure that doors into buildings are kept closed. Stop bird feeding.
- Removal of Harbourage – clear rubbish, debris. Do not allow gardens to become overgrown. Clear compost heaps, check outbuildings such as sheds.
- Trapping – use appropriate rat traps, but site them carefully so that other wildlife, pets or children can not accidentally come into contact with them. Check traps regularly.

### Services & Help from the Borough Council

The Borough Council can provide rodent control service to help local residents effectively resolve rodent problems. In most cases we make a charge for this service, but some low income families may qualify for treatment free of charge. An officer can visit your home and provide detailed guidance on the actions which are necessary.

After an assessment of the problem the officer will safely place the appropriate poisons. We will advise you of the safety precautions you need to take to ensure that children or pets can not touch the poisons we use. The officer will arrange to call back, check the poisons, and replenish them if necessary.

If you would like our help with rodent control please contact the Pest Control Service. Details below. Current charges and details of who may qualify for free services in on our website at [www.newcastle-staffs.gov.uk/pestcontrol](http://www.newcastle-staffs.gov.uk/pestcontrol)

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