

Rat Facts

Prevention and control

Rats are very adaptable pests and can make themselves at home almost anywhere there is food and shelter. They are not only smelly and destructive but can also transmit disease.

What's wrong with rats?

- Rats transmit diseases such as leptospirosis, typhus fever and rat bite fever.
- They can contaminate food with their excrement.
- They can generate unpleasant smells.
- Carry fleas or ticks which can harm pets or humans.
- Gnaw and dig through food containers, wood, insulation, electrical wiring – gnawing of electrical wiring may cause fires.

Have you got rats?

Often the first thing you will notice is sound – squeaking, gnawing or movement in walls, cupboards and ceilings. Rats are generally more active at night. To check if rats are around, look for:

- Droppings – 12mm to 18mm in length.
- Debris left from rats gnawing items like snail shells, almond shells and bones.
- Missing household food.
- Greasy grub marks on the paths they travel.
- Burrow holes around buildings.
- Pet dogs, cats, birds being more excitable than usual.
- Signs of gnawing damage.

Identifying pest rats:

In Australia the most prolific pest rats are:

- The black rat (*Rattus Rattus*), it has uniform fur colour of grey (not black) and may be white underneath, with a small body and large tail.



- The Norway Rat (*Rattus Norvegicus*) has dark brown to black fur with a large body and small tail.



Food and shelter for rats

Rats can travel several house blocks to find water and food. They will eat rubbish, pet food, compost scraps, fallen fruit and nuts, bird seed and dog faeces. Rat's shelter and nest in many places around dwellings, particularly:

- In walls, ceilings and under floors.
- Behind or under cupboards or bathtubs.
- Near hot water heaters.
- Behind boxes, machinery and furniture or in paper or cloth.
- In rubbish heaps, wood piles, thick vegetation or animal enclosures.
- In holes under buildings.

Rat prevention checklist

A few simple precautions to minimise food and shelter will help prevent rats:

- ✓ Access points to cupboards containing food and food-preparation materials are blocked.
- ✓ Rubbish bins have tight fitted lids and are regularly emptied.
- ✓ Rat food including fallen fruit, seed and waste from pets is removed.
- ✓ The compost heap is maintained & sealed – if rats are sighted no food scraps should be placed in the compost bin.
- ✓ Pet food is eaten soon after it is placed out (not left out for rats to find).
- ✓ Your home, shed and yard are clear of rubbish (e.g. old furniture and building materials).
- ✓ Items including wood and bricks are stacked at least 30cm above the ground to minimise hiding, nesting and thoroughfares for rats.
- ✓ Garden is maintained with grass and creepers cutback to prevent roof access.
- ✓ Cracks and holes in buildings have been identified and repaired (do not seal weep holes, vermin proof weep hole vents can be purchased from hardware stores).



Baiting

Though successful, extreme care must be taken when using rat baits (read instructions & MSDS carefully). Rat baits can be purchased from hardware stores and supermarkets. Council can also supply rat baits.

Trapping

Several traps should be used at once and can be purchased from supermarkets. Some tips:

- Do not set traps near food preparation areas.
- Place across 'runways' a few days before trapping to allow rats to get used to traps.
- Try baiting with: bacon, peanut butter, fish, meat, bread or chocolate.
- Check traps daily, remove dead rats and refresh the bait.
- Dead rats can be wrapped and placed in a domestic rubbish bin.

Remember that both trapping and baiting controls are generally short-term and rats will return if food and shelter is still available (see checklist).

Council can provide advice on prevention and control measures for rats.

If you believe you have a rat infestation at home or nearby contact:

Environmental Health on 9839 6055