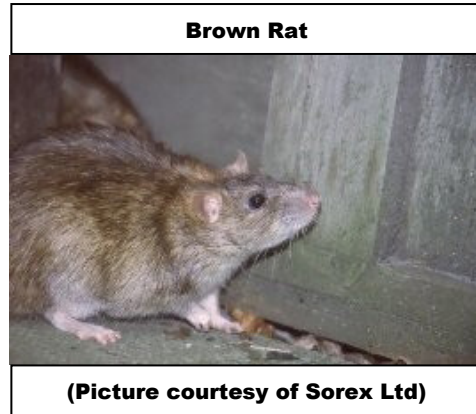


Rats Advice Leaflet – Rodent Control

Rats are a worldwide pest, they are very adaptable and known to spread life threatening diseases as well as causing structural damage in the areas they infest. This advice sheet aims to provide you with information on the following:

1. A description of what a rat may look like.
2. Problems linked to rats.
3. What rats eat.
4. What signs to look out for.
5. What can be done to control/prevent rats.

1. Description



The most common species in the UK is the Brown Rat (*rattus novegicus*), also known as the 'common' or 'sewer' rat. The Brown Rat is generally a brownish-grey colour on top and slightly lighter underneath. Brown rats are also characterised by the following:

- Their nose is blunt
- They have small furry ears
- They can live on average between 6 – 18 months
- In that time they can reproduce up to 7 times
- Each litter can consist of between 6 – 14 young
- Their size (including the tail) can range from approximately 25cm to 45cm / approximately 10 – 16 inches.
- Their eyesight is generally poor, but they have excellent hearing and smell.

2. Problems linked to rats

Rats have been known to cause major structural damage to residential/commercial properties and services, such as traffic light systems and power supplies.

Rats have also been known to spread the following diseases:

- Listeria and Pasteurella – which cause food poisoning and stomach bugs
- Leptospira – which causes flu like symptoms
- Worms – which can lead to general ill health
- Cryptosporidia and Taxoplasma – which cause Diarrhoea

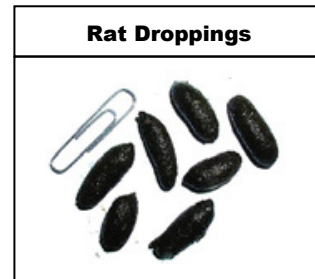
3. What rats eat

Brown rats are omnivorous (meaning they will eat almost anything – including dog mess/faeces, their own droppings and even each other) and can consume about 30g of food per day, which is about 1/10th of their average body weight.

4. What to look out for

Rats can live indoors and outdoors so evidence can be found in either location. However, they are more likely to be found outside or in buildings such as garages or sheds. If rats do enter your house, they are more likely to be found in cavity walls, lofts and basement areas, and under suspended wooden floors. If you suspect you have rats, indoors or out, look out for the following:

- Rat droppings, which are about 1-2cm or ¾” long and look like dark brown jelly beans. These are distinctly different from mice droppings, which are much smaller and look like small, dark brown grains of rice.



- Droppings in and around the edges of garden sheds, compost heaps, pet hutches, and bird tables.

- Burrows (rats are burrowing animals) that can be found in gardens, near rubbish, sources of food and compost heaps, which provide rats with ideal harbourage.

- Smears along surfaces where you suspect rats have been running. They are habitual animals, and will follow specific paths. These smears are normally caused by the build-up of grease from their fur.

- Rats secrete urine as they move and eat, so be aware of any unusual smells.

- Gnawing damage to containers, pipes, or structures.

- Flattened vegetation and/or worn earth

- Damage to packets of food, electrical cables, gas and water pipes, woodwork, and shredded paper which is used for nesting.



5. What can be done to prevent rats/deal with an infestation

The best approach to dealing with or preventing infestations is the combined use of rodenticides, proofing and good hygiene practice.

Rodenticides

Only use commercially prepared rodenticides. These are available at all good hardware and DIY stores. Any bait is best placed in areas where contact with rats is most likely to occur (see above). Ideal areas to place bait include areas behind cookers, under sinks, behind kitchen kickboards, in the loft, under raised wooden flooring, in electric/gas cupboards, along the outer walls and entrances of outhouses/garages/sheds.

Regularly check the bait to see if there is any evidence of bait taken/eaten. If there is, top up the bait accordingly. Continue baiting until there are no further signs of rats. If the bait is left out for long periods, rats have been known to build up resistance to rodenticides.

Do not expect immediate results. It can take between 3 – 10 days for rats to die once the poison has been ingested. However, if there are alternative sources of accessible food, rats will avoid the poison altogether and go for the tastier alternative.

CAUTION: Children and/or pets should be prevented from accessing the bait. Do not place baits within 1 metre of gas fires, and always make sure there is an unimpeded flow of air to the back of the fire.

Good Hygiene Practice

Controlling and preventing rats can also depend on:

- Good building maintenance – such as filling in holes and/or proofing openings bigger than 2.5cm in diameter.
- Removing garden rubbish, debris, old furniture etc, which can provide harbourage that would attract rats.
- Maintaining a tidy garden.
- Removing food scraps from gardens or alleyways.
- Do not feed birds on the ground. Use specialist feeder tables.
- For food stored in sheds and garages, use sealed metal or plastic containers to prevent rodent access.
- Use brush strips where there is a gap under a door.
- Use black bins to store rubbish. Rats will chew through black bags. Bins are available from most DIY stores.

Use the Waste Management service to arrange for the removal of large collections of rubbish or bulky items. Telephone 0121 303 1112 or email refusecollection@birmingham.gov.uk for further information and to request this service.

REMEMBER: legally, it is the responsibility of the owner / occupier to control pests on their premises. If you do spot an infestation, please contact the pest control section who will offer advice on removing / preventing infestations and attend where necessary.