

# *Facts on Rats*



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## *Health risk*

*Rats are a major risk to the health of the community. They can assist transmission of serious diseases, including the plague, dysentery, leptospirosis and typhus fever. Their fleas, lice and ticks can also adversely affect pets and humans.*

Their excreta and hair contaminate food and utensils, causing food poisoning and economic loss. Rat colonies damage and foul buildings and furnishings, and they generate a terrible smell.

Rats' gnawing will damage buildings, pipes, conduits and wiring and has been the cause of electrical fires.

Rats normally come out at night and usually are not seen unless they are very hungry or present in large numbers.

## *Spot the rat*

To check whether rats are around, look for:

- \* Droppings (12mm to 18mm long).
- \* Debris such as snail shells with the sides eaten out, almond shells, cape lilac berries, chop bones, etc. left in the corners of sheds, under homes and other secluded spots.
- \* Signs of fruit and vegetables having been eaten.
- \* Greasy rub marks along paths they travel.
- \* Burrow holes around buildings.
- \* Signs of gnawing damage.
- \* Pet dogs, cats, birds being more excitable than usual.
- \* Squeaking, gnawing or movement noises in walls, cupboard and ceilings and under floors.

## *Avoiding rat problems*

Rats can be discouraged and controlled by denying them food and shelter. A few simple precautions will prevent or help get rid of them:

- \* Store firewood away from the sides of sheds and fences and keep it well clear (40cm) of the ground.
- \* Regularly remove or limit garden waste or other disused material in sheds or around your yard.
- \* Remove fruit and nuts from trees or vines at the end of the season.
- \* Block holes and other potential access points around all buildings.
- \* Keep pet food dishes clean and store bulk pet food supplies in a manner which denies access to rats.
- \* Rubbish bins and compost containers should be well maintained and free from holes. Meat scraps must never be composted.
- \* Thoroughly examine your property to ensure you have discouraged rats from making your home their home.



## *Destruction of rats*



### *Baiting*

Poison baits are the most successful way of destroying rats. Many brands are available in retail shops. It is important to read the manufacturer's instructions carefully and check baits regularly to ensure they are not accessible to children or pets and to see whether rats have been eating them. At the time of printing Bromadiolone is the most commonly used substance in the rat baits.

### *Trapping*

The old-fashioned spring 'back break' trap is still the best trap for home use. However there is now available a plastic capture box which may also be used. Try different types of bait, e.g. bacon, fish, nuts, peanut butter, apple, pumpkin seed or sausage.

Some local governments supply poison rat baits free of charge to their ratepayers. Ask at your local government offices. Report any signs or sightings of rats to your local government's Environmental Health Officer and seek their advice on control measures.

### *Remember*

Occupiers and owners of premises are required by law to prevent harbourage of rats and secure their destruction.

boxes

*A rat is the world's most resilient animal.*



## *A rat can:*

fall 15 metres without hurting itself

\*

swim 800 metres

\*

tread water for three days

\*

jump one metre vertically,  
1.2 metres horizontally

\*

wriggle through a hole one-quarter its size

\*

gnaw through lead and aluminium sheeting

\*

produce up to 15,000 descendants in a year

## *The common pest rodents*



### *NORWAY RAT*

*Small ears & eyes;  
blunt nose;  
heavy set body;  
tail shorter than body.*

### *ROOF RAT*

*Large ears & eyes;  
pointed nose;  
heavy set body;  
tail longer than body.*



### *HOUSE MOUSE*



### *FAECES*



*Norway rat  
18 mm blunt*



*Roof rat  
12 mm*



*House mouse  
3-4 mm*

*Other leaflets available*

Fleas

Fly Control

Mosquitoes

Termite Prevention in Your Home

*Further information*

For advice on rat and mice control, contact your local government Environmental Health Officer

or

For the control of rats and mice you may seek the services of a licensed pest control technician

or

For further advice contact the Health Department's Pesticide Safety Section on (09) 383 4244 fax (09) 383 1819 <http://www.public.health.wa.gov.au>



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