

Rats have been responsible for transmitting a number of diseases to humans, including plague, rat bite fever, murine typhus, leptospirosis and salmonellosis. By assisting residents in helping reduce rat populations, we are able to minimize the disease potential created by their presence in and around our homes. Our response may also help prevent damage to property that often results from rodent activity. Property damage from rodents' gnawing may range from holes in floors and walls to damaged electrical wiring that may cause a fire.

Sanitarians respond to complaints about rat activity by conducting surveys, baiting only when necessary with an EPA registered product, and by providing rodent-proofing recommendations that may help a homeowner eliminate conditions that serve to attract and sustain rodents. The effective reduction of rodent populations often requires homeowners and communities to work together to eliminate sources of food, water, and harborage.

Signs of rat activity:

- **Burrows**

These are holes in the ground made by rats. They are about 4 inches wide and lead to nests. They are often found under decks, patios, porches, garages, piles of trash and compost piles.



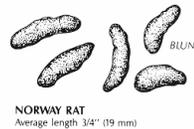
- **Chewed holes**

These may be found in garage walls, doors, garbage bags and cans, bags of pet food or birdseed and other similar places.



- **Droppings**

These are usually $\frac{3}{4}$ of an inch long. They are shiny and black when fresh, and grey and crumbly when older.



NORWAY RAT
Average length $\frac{3}{4}$ " (19 mm)



HOUSE MOUSE
Average length $\frac{1}{4}$ " (6 mm)

Factors that contribute to rat activity:

- **Food**

Rats must have a food source to survive. When a rat finds a food source, it is likely to build a nest nearby and reproduce. Food sources are found in yards and garages and can lead to a rodent problem. They include **garbage, bird seed, peanuts, pet food, dog waste, and fruit and nuts that have fallen to the ground from trees.** Eliminating food sources is the best way to prevent rodent activity.

- **Hiding places**

Rats like to build their nests in hidden areas under structures and trash piles where they feel safe. A rat will look for a hiding place after it has found a food source nearby.

- **Water**

Rats need water to survive. Locations with standing water or property near bodies of water are more likely to support rat activity.

How to prevent rodent activity:

- Keep garbage in sturdy cans with tight-fitting lids.
- Don't feed pets outside. Don't leave pet food out overnight or for long periods of time during the day.
- Don't feed birds, squirrels or other wildlife. Birdseed, peanuts and other food left on the ground will attract rats.
- Eliminate standing water if possible.
- Cover or seal all openings into your house or garage. A rat can fit through a space as small as $\frac{1}{2}$ inch. Cover basement floor drains with properly fitted lids.
- Use compost bins that have holes no bigger than $\frac{1}{4}$ inch.
- Don't let trash and junk pile up in your yard, shed, or garage.

Eliminating rat activity:

- Identify and remove food sources.
- Look for burrows and other signs of rat activity.
- Use rodent bait or traps to get rid of existing rat activity.
- Make all necessary changes to your home and yard to prevent future rat problems.

What should I do if I see rat activity in my yard or on a neighbor's property?

Contact CCBH to discuss the situation. If necessary, a representative from CCBH will conduct a survey, provide educational material and bait the area. **Conditions that are creating the problem will be identified and recommendations given to assist the resident to take action and eliminate the rodent infestation.**

How is bait used to get rid of rodents?

Our staff is licensed to apply EPA registered bait for rodent control. The bait is carefully placed so that it will target the rats and not other animals. A follow-up inspection may be conducted to determine if baiting and clean-up activities by the resident have eliminated the rat infestation. Additional baiting and further clean-up activities by the resident or a licensed pest control company may be necessary to prevent a rodent re-infestation.

What should I do if I find rat or mouse activity inside my home?

Contact CCBH to discuss the rodent problem. You will get advice on how to get rid of rodents and keep them from coming back. CCBH advises against the use of bait indoors. Snap traps and glue trays are safer. You may need to hire a pest management professional to help get rid of the problem inside your home.

Remember that rodents spread disease through their droppings, urine, and direct contact with people. Throw out any food

that rats have touched or eaten. Thoroughly clean all areas of your house where rodents may have been. When cleaning your home:

- Wear rubber gloves (latex).
- Do not stir up dust by sweeping or vacuuming droppings, urine or nesting materials.
- Wet the area to be cleaned with bleach or other disinfectant. Follow directions on the label.
- Use a damp cloth to pick up the material to be removed. Throw the cloth away.
- Mop or sponge the area with the disinfectant.

What should I do if the rodent problem continues on my property?

You can search your local phone directory under "Pest" or on the internet to locate a pest management professional. They can come out to your home, examine the inside and outside for signs of rodent activity and then trap or bait as necessary. You can also visit your local home improvement or hardware store to purchase traps or baits.

Where can I find more information on rodent control on the internet?

- CCBH – www.ccbh.net
- Ohio State University Extension Service www.ohioline.osu.edu
- USEPA www.epa.gov/opp00001/controlling/rodents.htm
- Centers for Disease Control & Prevention – www.cdc.gov/Features/Rodents



Rodent Control Program



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