



Rats

What do they look like?

The common rat (*Rattus Norvegicus*) has coarse, reddish/brown fur on its back (this can vary considerably) and a light coloured belly. An adult rat has body length of approximately up to 19cm plus a scaly tail of up to 12cm. They have a blunt nose and small ears.

Where do they live?

Rats are very adaptable creatures and will live where they can find food, water and shelter. They are also commonly found living in sewer systems and are good climbers and swimmers. In **homes**, they can live in loft spaces, wall cavities, cellars or under floorboards. In **gardens** they will burrow in to compost heaps and grassy banks or under sheds, back of ponds and even burrow into rockeries.

What are the signs of infestation?

- Seeing rats or hearing them.
- Damaged food packets, and evidence of teeth marks and holes where the rats have gnawed holes in furniture and floor boards etc. (Rats have to gnaw to wear down their front teeth which constantly grow)
- Droppings, which can be 12mm long roughly 'torpedo' shape.
- Tracks - rats travel along the same routes and leave trails through grass.
- Footprints and tail swipes on muddy or dusty surfaces.
- Smear marks from grease and dirt from their coats can be seen on corners of walls and surfaces.
- Burrows - entrance holes approximately 7.5 – 10 cm in diameter at the side of sheds, in grassy banks, under tree roots, log piles, edge of paving stones or around drain covers.

What do they eat?

Their natural foods are cereal products although they will eat almost anything and have become used to eating any kind of discarded food waste often available on our streets.

Why should rats be controlled?

Rats are potential carriers of a number of diseases. It is estimated that about 50% carry Weils Disease (leptospirosis). This is transmitted via the urine of the rat through cuts or abrasions or through contact with contaminated water. As they also live in sewers, they are capable of spreading bacteria from the sewage system. They spoil food by chewing the packaging and contaminate it with urine and droppings. They can cause damage to buildings and other structures through gnawing and burrowing. They can cause fire and water damage by chewing cables and pipes.

How do they gain access to properties?

Rats are opportunists and will exploit any kind of structural defect, e.g. a broken air grate; bricks missing in a wall, badly fitting doors can provide access. If the property and adjoining properties are in good structural order and rats are present, then it may be that there are effects in the drainage system serving the property. The rats are then able to tunnel under the foundations and enter via the cavity walls or the sub floor area.

Preventative treatment

- Keep your home in good repair so rats cannot gain access to it.
- Do not leave household waste where rats can get at it.
- Do not leave out food late at night for wild birds and animals, as this will encourage rats. If you wish to feed them then take in food at night.
- Ensure drain covers are in place and undamaged.
- Remove potential nesting sites by keeping gardens clean and tidy and cutting back overgrown areas.

How can the Council help?

- Highly trained officers from the Pest Control section can undertake a treatment for you. There is a charge for this service, (See the web link for prices)
- The treatment will entail the Pest Control Officer examining the property to find out the extent of the problem and will particularly try to identify how the rodents have gained access. Consideration will be given as to whether the drainage system could be defective allowing rats into the property. If faulty drainage is suspected to be the cause you may need to have your drainage surveyed and any defects repaired (if your drainage is covered on your insurance this may be undertaken by the insurers)

- Treatment will commence on the first visit and will involve the use of rodenticides placed in areas where the rats have been using. Safety is very important to us and we will only use appropriate methods, which may include the use of tamper resistant bait stations in areas accessible to children and pets.
- A course of treatment usually amounts to 4 visits to the property at weekly intervals; some results would be expected within 7 – 10 days.
- The Pest Control Officer will provide you with safety information and details of where the poisons are located. He will advise you of any repairs needed to the property and you should endeavor to have these repaired to prevent access by rodents in the future

How to contact us

Phone 01924 306459/60 **Fax** 01924 306419

E-mail: pestcontrol@wakefield.gov.uk **Website:** www.wakefield.gov.uk

**In writing: Wakefield MDC Pest Control Section
PO Box 92 Newton Bar, Leeds Road, Wakefield, WF1 1XS**