

# RAT FACTSHEET

## Description

The Common Rat is brownish grey on the back and grey underneath, but colour can vary. From head to tip of tail a rat can measure 20-30 cm. It is found in both urban and rural areas, both indoors and outdoors and is often associated with sewer systems.



## Rat Behaviour

As a rat's teeth grow continually, gnawing is a necessary behaviour. Almost any kind of material may be gnawed ie. electrical cable, water pipes. Rats burrow into grassy banks, underneath sheds and if given access can exploit cavities in walls and roof spaces of buildings, that they use for harbourage, to store food and often nest. Rats prefer to live close to sources of both food and water.

Rats are also good climbers and can climb vertical walls if the surface is sufficiently rough. They can also climb along fences and up bird tables to access food.

Rats are good swimmers and are often found near rivers and also in sewers.

## Signs of infestation

- Sighting rats
- Presence of droppings. Typically  $\frac{3}{4}$  inch and up to 1 inch in length (size of a raisin or bigger) and tapering to a point at one or both ends.
- Rat runs. Rats tend to follow the same routes and eventually can leave well worn pathways.
- Foot prints and tail swipes on dusty surfaces.
- Smear marks. These form in places where the rat brushes against frequently leaving a greasy or dirty mark.

- Burrows. In general rat holes are about 7 to 10 cm in diameter. (approximate size of a tennis ball)

### **Life Cycle**

Rats can breed even more efficiently than rabbits and large infestations can quickly develop if not controlled. Rats are capable of reproducing at about 3 months of age. After mating pregnancy lasts for 21-24 days and averaging 6-11 young rats in a litter.

### **Rat Control**

Rats are capable of transmitting disease to man and livestock and also can cause damage to food stuffs and buildings.

Many people also find the presence of rodents unacceptable.

To prevent rodents from infesting your area:

- Keep gardens clean and tidy, cutting back overgrown areas to minimise harbourage.
- If feeding wild birds, store food in containers, ensuring rats cannot reach the food. Any uneaten food will encourage rats to your garden.
- Inspect your property ensuring that there are no entry holes for rats to gain access into your home, ie. around waste pipes from the kitchen and bathrooms, central heating pipes and air vents.
- Ensure drains are covered and that manholes are intact ie. no rat holes are present in the near vicinity of the manhole.
- Ensure all household waste is enclosed in a rat proof container, eg wheelie bin.
- Keep doors closed to prevent access.

### **Rat Treatments**

**If rats are infested on your property you may contact the following;**

Environmental Health Department	028 9034 0160 for further advice and/or a visit.
Northern Group Systems Pest Control	028 2566 5818 to arrange treatment (a fee is charged)
Private Pest Control Firm	See Yellow pages