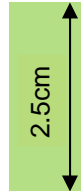


# Why are rats a pest?

Rats are very adaptable animals and have lived near man and his food supplies for hundreds of years. Problems can occur as a result of this, rats can spread disease and cause damage to materials, foodstuffs and structures.

The most common species within the UK is the common or brown rat, which is physically strong, can jump up to 3 metres and squeeze through a gap of less than 25cm. Rats will seek out any environment that provides food, water and shelter.



In homes they can live in loft spaces, wall cavities and cellar/sub floor areas. They also live and thrive in public sewer systems which can become damaged and allow rats access to your property. Drains may then require inspection and repair to prevent a re occurrence.

In gardens they are attracted by wild bird food, compost heaps, garden decking and collections of materials.

By living alongside humans, rats can spread diseases such as salmonella (a type of food poisoning) and leptospirosis (weils disease) which can be life threatening.

Rats can breed very quickly, two rats can produce 60 or more young in one year. A young female rat will be ready to reproduce at the age of 3 months.



## Signs of rats

The following are signs that rats may be present:

- \* Droppings—may be seen which are cigar shaped and around 1cm in length
- \* Damage—rats have to gnaw constantly and as a result may cause damage to belongings, structures, pipes and electric cables etc...
- \* Noises—may be heard from under floors, behind walls or in the loft



- \* Smears—black greasy marks maybe left by rats running over prominent objects over a long period of time
- \* Holes—may be seen (5-7cm diameter) in the garden with a smooth entry

## How to prevent rats

### Prevention is better than cure

There are many things you can do to avoid having a problem with rats, many of them are simple and things you can do in your day to day life.

### Exclusion

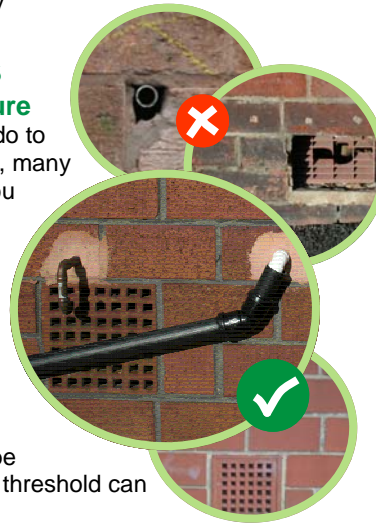
You can exclude rats from your home by repairing external structural faults such as:

- \* Gaps beneath external doors—draught excluding brush or bristle strips can be attached to the door or the threshold can be renewed or raised
- \* Holes surrounding pipes—these can be blocked with wire wool and then filled with cement or expanding foam
- \* Air vents—damaged or old style vents with holes over 2.5cm can be replaced or covered with fine mesh (*DO NOT BLOCK AIR VENTS*)

### Environment

You can make your home and garden environment less attractive to rats by using the following tips.

- \* Poor housekeeping—can increase the attraction of rats to your property, keep your house clean
- \* Food storage—keep stored food (including pet food) inside and off the ground and keep opened packages in sealed containers
- \* Outdoor pets—prevent your pets creating a food source for rats by attaching a board to the front of their cage to catch discarded food
- \* Bulky waste—remove any collections of materials (i.e. old furniture/carpets) kept close to your house as rats may use these to live in



- \* Domestic refuse—avoid the build up of domestic refuse outside your property. Use suitable containers such as wheeled bins and ensure they are regularly emptied and stored away from vertical surfaces where possible
- \* Trees and foliage—cut back tree branches so they do not overhang your property. Wall climbing plants should be trimmed and not allowed to reach from ground to roof level
- \* Overgrown gardens—rats can soon make a home in untidy gardens, especially if there is a local food source. Remove accumulated refuse, stockpiles of materials or plain old junk

### Bird feeding

Wild bird feeding is now one of the most common reasons for rat infestations around domestic homes. To reduce attraction of rats to your garden you should:

- \* Use suspended wire feeders with trays for waste
- \* Not put bird food directly on the ground
- \* Only put out enough bird food for the day and clear any spillages
- \* Guidelines are provided by the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds. You can contact them on **01273 775333** or at **www.rspb.org.uk**



## Compost bins

Compost bins are a good way of recycling but can attract rats. To reduce the risk of a rat infestation you should:

- \* Place a compost bin on a wire base, this will help keep rats out
- \* Renew damaged compost bins or compost heaps as they can provide a home to rats
- \* Not put household food waste such as meat and cooked food in compost bins
- \* Compost items such as fruit, leaves, general garden and vegetable waste

## Control measures

### Trapping

Break-back traps are an effective way to trap rats. Use several traps and placed next to walls where rats tend to travel. Traps can be baited with a variety of food but peanut butter, caramel, chocolate, fruit and fish based products tend to work best. Check traps daily, remove dead rats immediately and either burn the body or bag it and place in the domestic refuse. Wear gloves and never handle rats directly.

Cage traps baited with the same foods are effective (especially outdoors), however it is important to remember that you then have the responsibility of disposing of the trapped rats, which can bite.

**PLEASE NOTE— it is illegal to knowingly release a live trapped rat.**

### Poisons (rodenticides)

Rat poisons can be bought from supermarkets and most garden centres. Poison baits should be placed in a safe location (up to 100gms) where rats have been seen.

These should be checked every 4-5 days and replenished accordingly until no further poison is taken. If poison continues to be taken for more than 2 weeks or is not taken at all (but rats are still being seen) you may need professional help and advice.

### IMPORTANT

When choosing to use traps or poisons ensure you handle with care and always refer to the product label instruction BEFORE USE and follow these at all times.

Make sure traps and poisons are located away from children, pets and non target wildlife at all times.



# Rats

*Pest information leaflet*

Leeds City Council offers a service for the prevention and control of rats INSIDE domestic premises and an advisory service only is available for the prevention and control of rats OUTSIDE.

Council tenants should call 0113 2224406 if they have rats.

## Contact us

If you have any questions about the information in this leaflet or would like professional advice please contact

Leeds City Council Corporate Call Centre  
0113 2224406  
or email  
[pests@leeds.gov.uk](mailto:pests@leeds.gov.uk)

Further information and copies of this leaflet can be found on the council's website  
[www.leeds.gov.uk/pestcontrol](http://www.leeds.gov.uk/pestcontrol)

