

Rats and Mice

Information leaflet



EAST CAMBRIDGESHIRE
DISTRICT COUNCIL

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WHAT DO THEY LOOK LIKE?

The brown rat typically has brownish fur on its back and is grey underneath, but colour can vary from white through to black. Adult body length is 200 - 270mm plus a tail length of 150 - 200mm.

The House Mouse has a brownish-grey appearance and has good hearing but poor eyesight. Their size (including the tail) can range from approximately 100-200mm.

WHERE DO THEY LIVE?

Rats inhabit most areas that provide food, water and shelter. In domestic premises, they will live in loft spaces, wall cavities, cellars or under floorboards. In gardens, they will burrow into compost heaps and grassy banks under sheds or decking. Rats are commonly found living in sewer systems.

Mice live and breed in houses, buildings and other structures such as garages, garden sheds, and outbuildings, which offer shelter and protection from the cold and wet weather, and adequate food and water sources

WHAT DO THEY EAT?

Rats and Mice will eat almost anything that humans eat and other things besides. Most of the damage they do is by gnawing and ripping open packets. They have to gnaw to keep their teeth short and will chew anything including electrical wires.

DETECTION

- Sightings of live rats or mice
- Scratching noises in the wall cavities and across the ceiling (not to be confused with birds). Rat droppings can be 12mm long and taper at both ends, Mice droppings are approx 6mm long and found near food products
- Footprints in damp soil or dust and 'smear marks' along routes they travel.
- Rat Burrows - entrance holes 7 - 120mm in diameter in grassy banks, under tree roots, at the edge of paving or drain cover surrounds.
- Shredded paper or plastic used for nesting found indoors, in lofts or under floorboards.

- Gnawing - rats gnaw continually, even on non-food materials, in order to wear down their front teeth.
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DISEASE TRANSMISSION

Rats contaminate food with urine and droppings and can transmit many diseases to humans, including Salmonellosis (food poisoning) and Weils disease.

They can also cause serious damage to buildings and other structures due to gnawing and burrowing.

Mice can also spread Worms – this leads to poor health and Cryptosporidia and Toxoplasma – which cause diarrhoea.

CONTROL MEASURES

- **Reduce Cover/Harbourages** – Vegetation growth on or close to external walls will provide cover for rodents. Also, vegetation such as ivy growing on external walls may allow rodents to climb and enter buildings particularly where the roof level is low.
- **Refuse/bin areas** should be kept clean and any spillage of food material cleaned up promptly and thoroughly. All refuse bins should be fitted with securely fitting lids to deny rodents access. Refuse should not be left out in plastic sacks as rodents will tear the sacks to forage on the refuse inside.
- **Food waste** should not be disposed of on open compost heaps but placed in specifically designed compost bins.
- **Domestic pets** are often associated with rodent infestations. Pet food should be stored in sealed containers to deny access to rodents and regularly clean away droppings from your pets, including dog faeces.
- **Bird food** left over at the end of the day should be removed and not left out overnight as this will encourage rats into gardens.

TREATMENT

In combination with these measures, the control of rats and mice is most commonly achieved by using poison baits. These baits are approved for use, and have the appropriate Pesticide Safety Directorate or Health and Safety Executive registration for professional or amateur use. You can purchase treatments from hardware stores. Product label instructions and safety guidelines must be followed. The products must only be used in accordance with their approvals.

The baits should be laid in areas where there is evidence of activity (see "Safety" below). The rat or mouse needs to become accustomed to the new feeding site, and then needs to feed on the bait for several days to ensure a lethal dose is ingested. It may take between 5-10 days before some control is achieved.

SAFETY- IMPORTANT PLEASE READ

It should be remembered that rodenticides are pesticides that have been selected because of their high mammalian toxicity. **They must all be considered as hazardous.** Care must be used in ensuring that baits are laid in the correct manner and are not available to children, pets or other animals.

Alternatively pest control companies can be employed to treat for rats and mice and can be found on the internet or in the yellow pages. Baits laid by professional pest control companies should never be handled, removed or tampered with by householders. If in doubt, please contact the service provider.

This Council does not provide a pest control treatment service at the present time, however should you require further advice please contact Environmental Services on 01353 665555.

**IF SELF TREATING THE PRODUCT LABEL INSTRUCTIONS
SHOULD ALWAYS BE FOLLOWED.**