



Habinteg
Housing Association (Ulster) Ltd

Pest Control Advice

Recognising and dealing with rodents

Rodents can be persistent and if they gain access into your home they can spread diseases, cause damage and contaminate food.

It's vital to eliminate any infestation as quickly as possible



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Rats

Frequently Asked Questions



WHAT DO RATS LOOK LIKE?

The common rat typically has brownish fur on its back and is grey underneath, but colour can vary from white through to black. The adult body length is 20-27cm, plus a tail length of 15-20cm. The ship rat (smaller, black and with hairless ears) is nowadays very rarely encountered. Rats have an excellent sense of smell and taste and an acute sense of hearing. They are particularly sensitive to any sudden noise. They are agile climbers and excellent swimmers.

WHERE DO THEY LIVE?

Rats are often found in sewer systems but they can live in any situation that provides food, water and shelter. In homes, they can live in roof spaces, wall cavities or under floorboards. In gardens - in compost heaps and grassy banks or under sheds.

WHAT DO THEY EAT?

Preferred foods are cereal products, although rats are omnivorous and will eat almost anything that humans eat. Rats cause damage by gnawing and ripping open packets of food. They also spoil and contaminate food with urine, droppings and hairs. Up to 5% of food produced worldwide is lost as a result of rodent activity. Unlike mice, rats require water every day.



WHAT ARE THE SIGNS OF INFESTATION?

Sightings of live rats or droppings

Rats are usually active at night but may be seen during the day. Rat droppings are capsule-shaped, black and up to 12mm long. A rat will leave about 40 droppings a day. Fresh droppings will be soft and moist.

Runs

Rats follow the same routes when moving around and often leave trails through grass and low vegetation.

Footprints, smears and tail swipes

These can be seen on muddy or dusty surfaces. Smears - dark grey marks - are left on surfaces by repeated contact with the oils in rat fur.

Burrows

Rats can build complex tunnel systems, often extending deep into the ground. Entrance holes 70-120mm in diameter will be seen in grassy banks, under tree roots and at the edge of paving or drain cover surrounds.

Nests

Nests can be found in lofts or under floorboards.

Gnawing

Rats gnaw continually to wear down their front teeth, even on non-food materials such as electrical cables, pipework and wooden fixtures.

WHY MUST RATS BE CONTROLLED?

Rats can transmit many diseases to humans, including Salmonellosis (food poisoning) and Weils disease, usually from the urine of infected rats. Rats may also cause considerable damage to buildings, foundations and other structures due to gnawing and burrowing.

HOW CAN I PREVENT RAT INFESTATION?

Householders can assist in preventing rat infestation by taking a number of simple precautions.

- Keep your home in good repair; rats only need a gap of 15mm to gain entry.
- Remove potential nesting sites by keeping yards and gardens clean and tidy, and by cutting back overgrown areas.
- Ensure that drain inspection covers are in place and are in good repair.
- Seal gaps around heating and water pipes.
- Ventilation bricks and slots should already have a fine wire mesh incorporated. If this is worn, replace it externally with 3.15mm insect mesh.
- Do not leave household waste where rats can get access to it, close dustbin lids and composters and do not feed wild birds to excess - you may be feeding rats as well.

HOW CAN I GET RID OF RATS?

Rats are adaptable, highly mobile and breed rapidly. This can make rat control a difficult task for the untrained individual. We always advise that you seek

professional advice from your **Council's Environmental Health Service**. Some councils carry out pest control services free of charge (not all do).

If your council area does not carry out a free service please contact our Asset Management Team at the office responsible for your tenancy: Holywood Office on **028 9039 3300** / North West Office on **028 7136 0015**. Our contractors will need to attend your property to implement a bait programme and provide additional recommendations if required eg. seal rodent entry points at external boiler house around pipes etc.

If you decide to carry out the work yourself there are two options: **poison** or **break back traps**.

Poison (rodenticide) is available at most hardware stores and garden centres. Always follow instructions, keep it in a safe and secure and place out of reach of children and pets (pesticides may be harmful to other animals). ALWAYS wash your hands after use. It can take 4 to 12 days to take effect and it may result in a localised foul smell due to the presence of carcasses.

Break-back traps should be handled with care and placed next to walls where rats tend to travel. The trap should be baited with chocolate, biscuit or cereal. Rats are wary of new objects in their environment and will avoid them for a period of time. Do not set the spring on the trap until bait has been eaten, then re-bait and reset the trap. Use several traps, checking them daily, removing dead rats as soon as they are discovered.

Mice

Frequently Asked Questions



WHAT DO MICE LOOK LIKE?

The most common mouse found in buildings is the house mouse, varying between light brown and grey with a body length 6-9cm (the tail can add 10cm).

WHERE DO THEY LIVE?

Mice live in nests of cloth, wool and paper - often built in places such as roof spaces, under floors or in wall cavities. Mouse holes are 2-3cm in diameter.

WHAT DO THEY EAT?

Mice will eat almost anything. Most of the damage they do is by gnawing and ripping open packets. They also spoil food with urine and droppings.

WHAT ARE THE SIGNS OF INFESTATION?

Mice droppings

Droppings are 3-6mm, black and rod shaped. Fresh droppings will be soft and moist. Each mouse can leave approximately 80 droppings per day. Common places to find droppings are under the kitchen sink, hotpress, around central heating boilers and in roof spaces.

Gnawing

Mice gnaw continually on materials such as wood, carpets, paper, pipe cables and furniture. Check for damage to foodstuffs in cupboards.

Smears

These are dark grey marks left on surfaces by repeated contact with the oils in mouse fur.

Nests

Sometimes nests can be found indoors for example in lofts, under floorboards or in airing cupboards.

WHY MUST MICE BE CONTROLLED?

In addition to the damage caused through gnawing, mice can spread diseases such as salmonella and listeria, which lead to food poisoning and tummy bugs. You can assist in preventing mouse infestation by keeping your home in good repair. Remove potential nesting sites by keeping yards and gardens clean and tidy, and by cutting back overgrown areas. Do not leave household waste where mice can get access to it, close dustbin lids and composters and do not feed wild birds to excess - you may be feeding mice as well.

HOW CAN I GET RID OF MICE?

Mice infestations should be dealt with quickly, as mice reproduce rapidly. It's important to be aware that mice infestations are the responsibility of the tenant, though Habinteg might be able to provide some assistance in sealing entry points to the property. Professional pest control services have technical expertise and access to rodenticides that are not available over the counter but is possible to deal with mice yourself, either by use of poison or break back traps. In either instance, please refer to the information provided in the 'Rats' section.

TENANT RESPONSIBILITY

IMPORTANT: This leaflet contains many helpful tips to avoid attracting pests and prevent infestation. When this general guidance is ignored, for example when uncovered foodstuffs are left for periods inside and outside the home, when areas are left untended and uncleaned, this will attract rodents. Where a rodent infestation is caused directly by the actions or inactions of tenant, the responsibility and costs for pest control are with the tenant.

NB If Habinteg's contractors respond to a pest report and subsequently advise that the problem was clearly caused by the tenant, the cost of the pest control solution will be charged to the tenant.



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Habinteg's offices are open:
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