

## Rat Prevention and Control

Rats are common in our urban environments. They are more of a nuisance than a health risk. The rat population can be reduced if each property owner takes action to eradicate rats, minimise food and harbourage opportunities on their properties.

### How do I tell if there are rats on my property?

There are many things that indicate an infestation of rats such as:

- Droppings
- Signs of runways through the vegetation/garden
- Burrows under vegetation, rubbish, wood piles, or any other stored materials
- Gnawing of wood, plastic and wiring
- Tracks
- Food disappearing



Rats have a keen sense of smell, whilst their eyesight is poor. Using a highly developed sense of touch rats run close to walls and fences. This enables them to move quickly in the dark and explains the grubby, oily smears often seen around the edges of a room.

Debris such as snail shells with the sides eaten out, almond shells, chop bones etc left in the corners of sheds and other secluded spots, also signs of fruit and vegetables being eaten are a good sign that rats may be present.

Other tell tale signs include burrow holes around buildings, dogs, cats and birds being more excitable than usual, squeaking, gnawing or movement noises in walls, cupboards, in the ceiling or underfloor area.

### What can I do to discourage rats?

Rats like to live close to humans because we are a good source of FOOD and SHELTER (harbourage).

They will travel from 50 to 100 metres, or several house blocks, to sources of food and water.

**To discourage rats from living with us it is necessary to deprive them of sources of food and harbourage.**

Potential food sources include;

- Pet food – tinned food, dry food, meats and pellets
- Fruit and vegetables – on the trees/plants and on the ground
- Nuts – almonds, walnuts etc
- Grain - including that fed to poultry
- Composting materials
- Vegetable scraps
- Snails, worms, insects
- Anything edible

To discourage rats from living with you:

- Eliminate harbourage, for example old machinery, timber piles, weed growth and general litter should be removed. Regularly give sheds, store rooms etc a good cleanout and get rid of unwanted items
- Garbage must be kept in rat proof bins with tight fitting lids, and keep pet food dishes and bulk supplies in a manner that ensures no access by rats, to eliminate a possible food source
- Remove ripened and/or fallen fruit and nuts from trees and ground
- Avoid open compost heaps
- Prune branches away from buildings to eliminate rodent access to the roof and place wire mesh over floor vents

### How do I get rid of rats from my property?

The first step is to communicate with your neighbours to identify the extent of the infestation. Encourage them to also implement rat control measures and remove sources of harbourage and food from their properties. Treating at the same time will be more effective in eradicating rats.

The next step is to identify where rats are running and select suitable sites for the placement of poisoned baits, cages or traps. To encourage rats to eat from baits/traps all other food sources should be removed before commencing treatment.

#### Baits

Generally the use of baits is the simplest and most effective way to get rid of rat infestations. The poisonous baits kill the rats.

Rat baits, which can be obtained from most hardware stores, should be placed in locations away from open spaces but where the rats visit.

*If you are concerned about children or pets accessing the baits*



*you can use a lockable bait station.*

If you do not want to place baits at ground level in your yard, you can place them along your fence rails. Rats often travel along fence rails as they move through properties in search of food. The bait can be placed inside a PVC pipe attached to the fence rail. The rats will run through the pipe and eat the bait.

When choosing rat bait ensure that you select first generation ones with active ingredients Warfarin (e.g. in Ratsak Double Strength) and Coumatetralyl (e.g. in Racumin), which work more slowly and break down more quickly. These products will have 'caution' on the label, not 'poison'. They pose less of a risk if wildlife or pets eat the rodents.

Even safer are rat bait brands that are 'based upon natural products' including Ratsak Naturals and Yates Natural. The active ingredients are corn gluten meal and salt. These products cause the rodents to die of dehydration.

## Traps

Rat traps are available from most hardware stores and larger supermarkets.

Where there is evidence that a considerable number of rats are present on the property 4 or more traps will need to be used if this method is to be successful.

The reason for this number of traps, is that rats learn very quickly; if they see another rat dead in a trap then they will not go near traps again.

It is important therefore, to trap all the rats present at the same time. However, repeat trapping may not be very successful and baiting may be necessary if there is still evidence of rats on the property.

Since rats are timid creatures and travel close to walls whenever possible, traps should be placed at right angles to walls with the platform nearly against the wall.

There are also electronic rat traps. These detect the presence of a rodent via metal plates on the floor of the trap, then deliver a lethal dose of high voltage electricity stepped up from batteries to several thousand volts.

Some brands offer remote indication to tell you when the trap has operated.

## What food should I use as bait in my traps?

Rats are attracted to a wide range of foods and favour baits including:

- fruity, sugary substances, such as fruit or liquorice all-sorts.
- Meats with a pungent odour such as fried bacon, metwurst or salami can also be used to bait traps.

## Cage traps

Rat cage traps are available from most hardware stores.

A rat cage trap is a metal cage that is designed primarily to catch rats without killing them. Food bait (not poisoned) is put in the cage trap.

When an animal enters the cage and moves toward the bait, the mechanism triggers and closes a door over the entry point. The animal is caught alive and without injury.

The animal can be transported and released elsewhere or disposed of humanely.



Rat cage traps can be hired from council at any of our offices. They cost \$11.50 (inc GST) per week (2021-22 financial year).

## Electronic rat repellers

Electronic rat repeller devices are available at most hardware stores.

The electronic rat repeller is a device that plugs into a power socket and emits a regular ultrasonic soundwave that is only slightly audible to human ears. According to the manufacturers of these devices rats do not like the ultrasonic soundwave and stay away from your home.

The ultrasonic soundwave can not go through walls or furniture, so you may need several throughout your home.



## When should I contact the council?

Please note that seeing 1 or 2 rodents is not an infestation. Implementing control measures on your property will help reduce rodent numbers. Please try to work together with your neighbours. If there is an excessive infestation and your neighbours will not cooperate by treating for rodents and removing food sources and/or harborage on their properties, council can talk to them and encourage them to do so.

Most of the above information also applies to mice except they tend to stay within or close to buildings.

**To discuss your situation contact our Environmental Health Section on 8384 0666 or visit our website at [www.onkaparingacity.com](http://www.onkaparingacity.com).**

