

# Rats



## Do you have rats?

If you haven't seen rats in your property there are several tell-tale signs that they are around:

- droppings - these are normally bullet-shaped and can be between 8mm and 25mm long
- footprints may be seen in dust
- dark smears on walls from the grease and dirt in the rat's coat
- gnaw marks on woodwork
- holes or burrows maybe seen in outside areas, perhaps accompanied by heaps of earth or debris
- damage to food and property
- unexplained disappearance of food
- scratching noises, but mice, squirrels or birds could also be responsible

## Why you might have rats

There are many reasons. Rats will scout for food, water and warmth and at times will enter property or pass through gardens to get to sources of food and water from where they may be living.

Food left for birds or plastic bin bags not contained in bins can also offer a food supply to rats.

Damaged airbricks, over-sized or redundant pipe holes and old damaged drainage systems can provide access for rodents into your property, particularly where disused drainpipes have been removed and not sealed off properly.

Rats can come up through the toilet pan but this does not happen that often. If you have an outside toilet and it is not often used, check that it has water in it to help prevent this.

## What you should do

As soon as you think you have rats, get professional help.

It is important to control rats, not only because of the damage they may cause and the food they spoil through contamination by droppings and urine, but also because they transmit disease (some of which are transferable to humans) as they live and breed in sewers.

As well as seeking professional help, you must also:

- wash all food preparation surfaces with an anti-bactericidal agent before preparing food
- clean up any food when finished with, as good housekeeping is the first line of defence
- if rats are gaining access through the back of a cupboard, all accessible food should be removed and placed in sealed containers and the cupboard cleaned

If you have a rat trapped in your house, in most cases it will find its way out through the same way it got in (perhaps a hole in the floor or brickwork). If it has come in another way and cannot get back out, you should, if possible open an external door to let it out; otherwise limit its movements by closing all internal doors to contain it, and get professional help. Do not try to handle the rat – like any wild animal it will defend itself when scared. As for rats going for the throat, this not true; when cornered however they may try to get past you to escape.

Should you find a dead rat, burying or burning is the officially advised method for disposal. However double-bagging in carrier bags so as to “seal the rat in” and putting this in with your refuse would be acceptable as this would then be buried or burnt for you.

## Do we treat this problem?

Yes, we place poison in secure tamper-resistant bait stations and hide these from sight where necessary so that children and pets cannot access them.

In the unlikely event that a child or pet eats the poison, the poison we use works in proportion to body weight and would need to be consumed over a number days to reach a harmful amount. This is unlikely to happen as the poison contain a human taste deterrent. When the member of staff calls, they will leave behind a poison note explaining what you should do in the unlikely event of an incident.

If you do not want the problem treated with poison the only alternative is to use break-back traps yourself, although this method is known not to be very successful.

Despite popular belief, having a cat will not solve the problem.

## Do you need to do anything to prepare for the treatment?

We do not ask that you do anything specific to prepare for our visit to treat but it would be sensible to follow the hygiene advice given in the section "What you should do" above.

Do not carry out any repairs or proofing work until after the treatment is complete.

## After the treatment

If a rat dies in an inaccessible place there may be a bad smell for a few days. If this happens we can use a product to mask the odour.

Once the problem has been treated you should repair any external defects to the property that could give the rats access.

## More information

Visit the [pest control page on portsmouth.gov.uk](https://www.portsmouth.gov.uk/pest-control) or call Pest Control on 023 9283 4251.