

Rats...



Bolton Council

What do they look like?

The common rat typically has brownish fur on its back and 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 ship rat, which is nowadays rarely encountered in Britain, is smaller than the common rat and usually black in colour. It has large hairless ears and a tail that is longer than its head and body length.

Where do they live?

Common rats live in any situation that provides food, water and shelter. In homes they will live in loft spaces, wall cavities, cellars or under floorboards. In gardens, they will burrow into compost heaps and grassy banks or under sheds. They are commonly found living in sewer systems.

Ship rats are agile climbers and are usually found indoors, living in roof spaces. They are rarely found in sewer systems.

What are the signs of infestation?

- Sightings of live rats.
- Common rat droppings can be 12mm long and taper at both ends.
- Runs - rats follow the same routes when travelling, and leave trails through the grass and low vegetation.
- Footprints and tail swipes - on muddy or dusty surfaces.
- Smears - dark grey marks left on surfaces by repeated contact with rat fur.
- Burrows - entrance holes 7 - 120mm in diameter in grassy banks, under tree roots, at the edge of paving or drain cover surrounds.
- Nests - sometimes found indoors, in lofts or under floorboards.
- Gnawing - rats gnaw continually, even on non- food materials, in order to wear down their front teeth.

What do they eat?

Their favourite foods are cereal products, although they will eat almost anything that humans eat.

Most of the damage they do is by gnawing and ripping open packets. They also foul food with urine and droppings.

(continued)



Pest status

- Rats can transmit many diseases to humans, including Salmonellosis (food poisoning) and Weils disease.
- Rats will eat or contaminate food intended for humans. It is estimated that up to 5% of food produced world-wide is lost as a result of rodent activity.
- Damage to buildings and other structures due to rat gnawing and burrowing.

Control

Rats are adaptable, highly mobile and breed rapidly. This combination makes rat control a difficult task for the untrained individual.

The Local Authority provides a service for the treatment of rats in domestic properties. Fully trained Pest Control Officers will survey the infestation, then place poison bait in the most appropriate locations. Follow up visits will be made to ensure the success of the treatment.

Householders can assist in preventing infestation by some simple measures:

- Remove potential nesting sites by keeping yards and gardens clean and tidy, and by cutting back overgrown areas.
- Do not feed wild birds or other animals to excess - you may be feeding rats as well.
- Keep your home in good repair so that rats cannot gain access to it. Ensure that the drain inspection covers are in place and are in good repair.
- Do not leave household waste where rats can get at it.

When using pesticides always follow the instructions on the label

