

## ABOUT RATS

Rats have very accomplished climbing skills and can scale walls, pipes, cables and trees. They can jump one metre vertically, 1.2 metres horizontally and can fall 15 metres without hurting themselves. Rats are also extremely good swimmers; they can swim and can tread water for up to three days. Rats can wriggle through a hole one-quarter of its size, gnaw through lead and aluminium sheeting and produce up to 15 000 descendants in a year.

The **Norway rat**, also called the brown rat or sewer rat, and the **Roof rat**, also known as the black rat or fruit rat, are the two common nuisance rats found in the Adelaide City Council area.

The Norway rat is larger and more aggressive than the Roof rat. These rodents eat and contaminate food, damage buildings and other property by their gnawing and burrowing, and may spread disease that affect people and pets. Some of the rodent contaminations are tapeworm, salmonella food poisoning and various other fevers. These contaminations can be transmitted by:

- Food or utensils contamination with urine or droppings.
- Contamination by direct contact with urine or droppings, where bacteria can enter the skin through small scratches.
- Indirect contamination through blood sucking insects like fleas and mosquitoes.
- Contamination by directly biting humans.

Food spoilage and contamination which occur mostly in commercial properties can be responsible for large losses of food in storage, either by directly eating the food or by rendering food inedible through contamination.



For further information and advice, please contact:  
**Environmental Health Services**  
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## RAT PREVENTION AND CONTROL



Rats in and around buildings pose a serious threat to human health. The disease threat can be minimised by implementing control and management procedures.

Rats are nocturnal, with their peak activity at dusk or before dawn. In the city, rats will live in the ground where there is available space and are also known to live entirely inside buildings. Rats will seek food outside, but many times will come inside at night to forage for food and return to their burrows. Rats prefer foods with a high protein or carbohydrate content, but will eat almost any type of food. They also need water to survive.

Needing a water source they can obtain water from toilets, sinks, rain puddles, condensation from utility pipes and fountains.

## HOW THE PRESENCE OF RATS CAN BE DETECTED

- Rat droppings - thin, black and 1 cm in length.
- Gnawing - rats gnaw to control the growth of their teeth. Usually materials such as wood, soft metals, soap, food containers and electrical wiring.
- Teeth marks in eaten food, especially fruits, vegetables and packet food.
- Debris, like snail shells with the sides eaten out left in the corners of sheds, under properties and other secluded spots.
- Rat runs - rats have poor vision and oily coats. Over time, marks along walls or fences are formed and a path becomes worn into dust or grass. By following the rat run the rat may be traced to its shelter.
- Burrow holes around buildings.
- Squeaking, gnawing or movement noises in walls, cupboards and ceilings and under floors, especially at night.

## HOW TO DISCOURAGE RATS FROM YOUR PROPERTY

Rats can be discouraged from your property by denying them food and shelter. Ways to deny rats (and also pests such as cockroaches) food and shelter include:

- Keep property clean and tidy. Remove materials that may provide shelter for rats such as tin, overgrown vegetation, general litter and any unwanted items. Do not allow waste to build up over time.
- Stack timber/firewood at least 30cm off the ground. Do not store on the ground or against sheds and fences.
- Waste storage areas should be kept clean at all times and any food spills should be wiped up immediately.
- Rubbish bins and compost containers should be well maintained and free from holes.
- Ensure gardens are well maintained. Keep grass short. Regularly remove or limit garden waste or other disused materials in storage sheds or around your premises.
- Prune branches away from buildings to prevent access to the roof. Seal up holes in brick work or roofing materials using hard filler (ie. concrete) or alternatively use metal materials such as wire mesh or steel wool.

Norway Rat



Roof Rat

## HOW TO GET RID OF RATS

Rats are suspicious of changes in the environment or new foods, for this reason it may take a couple of days for traps or poison baits to take.

Rodenticides are poison baits and should be used in areas where domestic animals and children can't reach. There are tamper-proof bait stations that hold the baits in places and keep children and pets out.

Rat baits are available at hardware stores and supermarkets. If purchasing baits from hardware stores and supermarkets, look for the baits in a block form. Baits should be placed in areas where rats frequently visit, away from open areas and should be inaccessible by children and pets.

A simple bait station that keeps the bait away from pets can be made from a piece of PVC pipe, approximately 400-800mm long. Secure the pipe where the rats are active. Leave for a day or two without bait, then place bait inside. It is recommended that the baits are secured by wire to ensure the rats have to gnaw them rather than drag them out. Check bait daily and replenish as required.

Remember, rats will not take the bait if there is a normal food source available. Cleanliness is the major key to prevent and control rat populations.

Trapping and poisoning will kill rats. However it is only a temporary measure. Rats will return if conditions are favourable to their needs.