

Rats and mice

Just about anywhere humans and their settlements are located you will find rats and mice. The more commonly known rat and mouse species introduced to Australia are the **Norway Rat** (*Rattus norvegicus*), the **Roof Rat** (*Rattus rattus*) and the **House Mouse** (*Mus musculus*). These animals are well adapted to living in very close association with humans, sharing their food, water and shelter.

Identification

Norway Rat:

- Heavy set body up to 450g
- Blunt nose and small ears
- Coarse red/brown hair
- Tail usually shorter than the body and head

Roof Rat:

- Slender body up to 260g
- Pointed nose and large ears
- Fine grey, black or brown hair
- Tail is usually longer than the body and head

House Mouse:

- 7.5cm long up to 15g
- Grey, brown hair
- Body shape is pointed at one end
- Tail about 8 cm long



Important! The native *White-Tailed Rat* (*Uromy caudimaculatus*) is a protected species. These rats can weigh up to 1 kg, have grey-brown hair with a creamy underside. Their tail is long and naked with a white end.

Rats and mice as pests

Rats and mice are responsible for enormous losses of food, either by directly eating the foods or by rendering them inedible through contamination. Rats and mice are also known to eat and damage fruit and other crops growing in home yards.

Rats and mice may carry disease causing organisms such as Leptospirosis, Salmonella typhus and ringworm.

Rats and mice can cause serious physical damage to a range of materials. They can damage doors, skirtings and other parts of buildings, upholstery, books, wires and cables as well as food containers or packaging and parts of equipment and machinery.

Identify the signs!

Visual sightings

Droppings

Sounds of gnawing, scuffling, squeaking

Urine stains often appearing like sprinkles over the areas travelled on

Urinating pillars – long term activity of mice sometimes leads to a build-up of urine, grease, dirt and dust to form small mounds

A **beaten path** where they have developed a “run” that leads to their shelter

Greasy marks along the paths they travel

Burrow holes around buildings

Physical damage cause by gnawing

Food that has been **eaten** or has gone **missing**

Pets that are more excitable than usual

Control measures - What can you do?

Build

- **Block** possible entry points into your dwelling.
- **Seal** holes, gaps, skirting boards and cracks under doors.
- Ensure access doors under the house are **tight fitting**.
- **Clear** your house and land of rubbish, timber and building material.
- **Keep** lawns short, maintain vegetation, remove garden refuse.
- Keep your garage and shed **neat and tidy**
- **Repair** any holes or other access points around buildings, fences and concrete slabs.

Manage food sources

- **Remove** sources of food that may attract rats and mice.
- **Hygiene** is important. Keep living areas neat and tidy.
- **Clean up** food scraps and place in a sealed bin
- All food should be kept in a fridge or **sealable containers**.
- **Pick** all fruit from trees, **remove** dropped fruit from the ground.
- **Ensure** pet food is not left outside for extended periods of time and is stored securely.
- **Compost** needs to be spread with a covering of lime and soil or stored in a sealed bin.
- Waste storage areas need to be kept **clean and sanitary**.
- **Bird cages/aviaries** should be well maintained
- Be aware that **vegetable patches** may attract rodents.

Chase: poison or anti-coagulant baits

- **Baits** are available at supermarkets and hardware stores - Place large quantities of bait in one or two locations where rats and mice frequent (such as under cooking equipment, behind fridges or along their routes of travel).
- Bait for at least 2 weeks to reduce rat numbers. Most deaths occur around 7 days after consumption but may take as long as 2 weeks
- **Wax blocks** may be used externally as they are waterproof baits. These can also be nailed to wooden fences.

- Other physical methods such as **live traps** and **electronic devices** which emit electromagnetic pulses (unproven) can be used.
- **Traps** using unconventional methods are also available.
- Employ a **licensed pest control company** if the problem cannot be easily contained.

Regulations

The *Public Health Regulation 2018* sets out requirements to help prevent the health risks posed by rats and mice. This regulation stipulates that an owner of a relevant structure must take reasonable steps to stop rats and mice entering the structure. There is also a requirement to ensure rats or mice do not live or breed on land around a dwelling.

It is unlikely that these pests will ever be eradicated completely from an area, however through education and control methods, rat and mice numbers may be effectively controlled.

Precautions with using bait

- Ensure you understand and follow all **safety directions** provided by the manufacturer and associated Safety Data Sheet.
- Extreme care must be taken to **avoid accidental poisoning** (including secondary poisoning) of humans and non-target species.
- Always **wash hands thoroughly** with soap and water after contact with bait.
- Do not allow bait to contaminate foods intended for human consumption.
- Ensure baits are not accessible to children, dogs, cats, native animals or poultry.

Further information

For enquiries, please contact Council by phone on 1300 692247 and ask to speak to the Licensing and Compliance team.

Scan the QR code to read more information on Council's website.

