

RATS AND MICE

INFORMATION SHEET

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:

- ❖ Weight of 450g
- ❖ Heavy Set Body
- ❖ Blunt nose
- ❖ Small ears
- ❖ Course, red – brown hair
- ❖ Tail is usually shorter than the body and the head

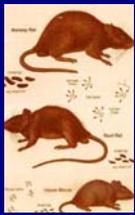
Roof Rat:

- ❖ Weight of 260g
- ❖ Slender body
- ❖ Pointed nose
- ❖ Large ears
- ❖ Fine grey, black or brown hair
- ❖ Tail is usually longer than the body and the head

House Mouse:

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

- ❖ It is important to note that the native Giant White-Tailed Rat (*Uromys caudimaculatus*) is regarded as being a protected species by the Queensland Government. These rats weigh up to a kilogram, being the same size as a small domestic cat or rabbit. They have grey-brown hair with a cream underside. The paws are pale in colour and the 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. They spread diseases by feeding and urinating on stored products and contaminating food with their droppings.
- ❖ 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 OF RODENTS

- ❖ **Visual sightings.**
- ❖ **Sounds** of gnawing, scuffling and squeaking.
- ❖ **Droppings.**
- ❖ **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 or 'urinating pillars'.
- ❖ 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** caused by gnawing.
- ❖ **Signs** of fruit and vegetables that have been eaten.
- ❖ **Food** that has gone **missing**.
- ❖ **Pets** which are more **excitable** than usual.



RATS AND MICE

CONTROL METHODS

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 and 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 and 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.
- ❖ Domestic refuse storage areas need to be kept in a clean and sanitary condition.
- ❖ 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. **Tip:** these can also be nailed to wooden fences.
- ❖ Other physical methods such as sticky pads, live traps and electronic devices which emit electromagnetic pulses (unproven) could be used.
- ❖ Traps using unconventional methods are also occasionally marketed.
- ❖ Employ a licensed pest control company if the problem can not be easily contained.

COUNCIL'S RESPONSIBILITIES

The *Public Health Regulation 2005* 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. Furthermore, there is also a requirement detailed 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 all safety directions have been read and you understand the manufacturer's directions before use
- 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 placed in locations not accessible to children.
- Ensure baits are not accessible to dogs, cats, native animals or poultry.

CONTACT POISONS INFORMATION CENTRE

For further enquiries, contact Customer Service on 4044 3044
and ask to speak to the Environmental Health Unit.

