

Rats

Rat Profile/Characteristics

The Common, Brown or Norway rat is the most abundant of the two types of rat found in Britain. It has a heavy body with small ears and eyes, and the tail is shorter than the head and body. It weighs 100 - 500g and is between 20 - 28 cm in length. Typically it is brownish grey on the back and grey underneath, but the colour can vary.

The ship rat or black rat is now rare and mainly confined to port areas. It has a more slender body, with large eyes and ears, and the tail is longer than the head and body. Usually 15 - 20cm in length, and usually black in colour, it can be grey or tawny with a grey or white underside.

Rats are colour blind and sight plays only a minor role compared to the highly acute sense of hearing and well-developed sense of smell.

Where To Find Rats

Common rats are widespread in urban and rural areas and can be found anywhere food and shelter is available. They are more active at night, but may be seen during the day searching for food, water or shelter.

Rats are active burrowers, digging holes about 10cm in diameter, extending far into the ground, sometimes in a complicated tunnel system with many openings. Such systems can be found around the outside of buildings, in embankments, hedgerows, rubbish tips and tall undergrowth.

Rats are very quick to exploit cavities in walls, roof spaces and ducts of buildings, which they will use to hide in.

Problems Caused By Rats

Rats are considered pests because of their adverse effect on human populations, such as transmission of disease, damage to buildings and destruction of food.

Along with a number of diseases that can be associated with rats, gnawing is a part of their natural behaviour and can lead to damage to electrical cables, lead pipes and wooden fittings.



Life Cycle Of A Rat

Rats can breed very efficiently and large infestations can develop very quickly from a single pair. Conditions to suit rapid population growth are warm conditions, surplus food and water, and undisturbed cover for rearing young and escaping from enemies.

The female rat is capable of reproducing at the age of 12 weeks, and can give birth to litters of 6 - 11 babies every 28 days, although an average of 6 litters a year is normally produced.

Under natural conditions, it is unlikely that many rats live for more than a year. Females tend to live longer than males.

How To Control Rats

The householder can do a lot to prevent infestations. This can include ensuring buildings are in good repair, sealing up gaps around pipes going through walls, and repairing broken airbricks.

Defective drainage should be quickly repaired, manholes should not be left uncovered for long periods of time.

Avoid leaving excessive food out for birds and where possible use a secure birdfeeder. Compost heaps are a ready source of food, so make sure that these are controlled.

Make sure household waste is stored and disposed of properly. Avoid accumulations of rubbish, overgrown areas in the garden and piles of timber, and clear areas that may offer shelter or nesting materials.

We provide a pest control service for the treatment of rats in both domestic and business premises. Please contact us for further information on treatments and current charges.