

## Rats

### Advice to householders about rats

#### Treatment

After a thorough inspection has been carried out a rodenticide will be used to illuminate the infestation. Tamper proof rodent boxes or open tray (in out of reach) places will be laid. A follow up inspection will be carried out after 7-10 days to monitor the treatment until they have been eradicated. The following rodenticides have been used:

- Storm containing 0.005% flocoumafen
- Sakarat D containing 0.005% difenacoum

These rodenticides contain a blue dye that will turn a child's tongue blue if swallowed. They also contain a compound called 'Bitrex' which tastes disgusting and will make the child spit it out.

**Please keep children and pets away!**



Although there are different types of rat in this country, problems with rats in the Dorset area are most likely to be due to the brown rat, also known as the common rat.

The adult common rat can weigh up to 400g in weight and can grow up to 30cm in length. Typically, the common rat is brownish grey on the back and grey underneath, but colour does vary and black forms have also been found.

#### Distribution and habitat

The common rat has only been recorded in Britain since early in the 18th Century. It was thought to have been introduced in shipping.

The common rat can be found anywhere that offers food and shelter, which can also include drains and sewers. They burrow into hedgerows, compost heaps and under garden sheds or made-up ground, where they will make nests. They may be attracted to accumulations of refuse where there is sufficient food and shelter.

If they get into houses, they can be found in the roof space, under floors and inside cavity walls. Rats are mainly active at night, but can be seen during the day searching for food.

## **Significance**

Rats can be hazardous to health, contaminating foodstuffs and spreading diseases. Rat urine is known to contain bacteria that can cause Weil's disease, a dangerous illness with flu-like symptoms. Another disease commonly spread by rats is Salmonellosis – a type of food poisoning – which makes prevention of rats in food premises very important.

They can also cause considerable damage to property by gnawing at woodwork, water pipes and electric cables as well as damaging foodstuffs. Because numbers are thought to be increasing it is important that sightings are reported.

## **Life cycle**

Female rats can produce up to six litters a year with a litter size on average of 6 to 11. Rats breed rapidly and can reproduce at the age of three months. Rats can give birth every thirty days. Very few rats will live longer than one year.

## **Control methods**

If you think that you have a rat problem then you will need professional help in controlling the infestation.

The first indications of a problem are likely to be damage to property, droppings (approximately 12mm long) and holes appearing in the ground. It is important to investigate to determine the source of the infestation. Using poison or a trap may kill individuals but other steps may be necessary to prevent further infestations.

## **Prevention**

The following simple rules may help to minimise the risk of infestation:

- Do not leave any excess food waste outside overnight.
- Place all household rubbish in the dustbin and keep the lid shut.
- Do not leave areas of the garden piled up with rubbish or overgrown, as rats may nest in this area.
- Block any holes used for services that may allow access into your property.
- Ensure that rats cannot escape through old drainage connections e.g. disused toilets.
- Do not throw food for birds onto the ground.