

Rats

There are only 2 species of rat found in the UK, the Common Rat (*Rattus Norvegicus*) also known as the Brown Rat or Sewer Rat, and the much rarer Ship or Black Rat (*Rattus Rattus*) which is confined to a few sites in dockland areas. Only the Common Rat is to be found throughout the UK and typically has brown fur but this can vary from dark grey to pale brown. Adults can reach up to 270mm (10") with a tail of 200mm (8"). The average weight is 350gms (12oz).

The Common Rat is a very adaptable creature, able to live under or above ground. It is an excellent climber, persistent burrower and a good swimmer

Life Cycle

Rats are sexually mature at 12 weeks and the female is able to produce a litter of 6-11 young every 21-24 days. The young are weaned at 3 weeks. Most rats die before they reach 12 months.

Problems

Rats are well known for their disease carrying capabilities. In addition to being responsible for the spread of the plague, they are also carriers of Weils Disease (*Leptospirosis*), Murine Typhus and Salmonella. They are also host to a variety of parasites including tapeworm, ringworm, fleas and mites.

Rats also cause an immense amount of damage, either by chewing, electrical wiring for instance, or from contaminating foodstuffs with their droppings and urine. Up to 5% of food production is lost annually. They also responsible for damage caused to sewers and drains by their tunnelling.

Rats are particularly fond of humans, as we present so many opportunities for them to take advantage of. Their requirements are very similar to ours: shelter, food and water. Remove the shelter or food source and there is nothing to attract them. Common attractions are compost heaps and food put out for birds.

Control

To prevent rats from becoming established in your property you should ensure that you have no accumulations of garden rubbish which may provide harbourage. If you have a compost bin, then it is advisable to stand it on 1" wire mesh to prevent rats from tunnelling into the bin.

Likely entry points into buildings are broken or missing airbricks, gaps around pipework, gaps under exterior and garage doors and faulty drains. Older properties with cast iron soil vent pipes should have a wire balloon fitted to the top of the soil stack. If your foul drain has an intercepted manhole you should ensure the interceptor cap is in place.

If you have seen signs of rats, then you should contact TRDC Pest Control on 01923 776611.