

WHAT YOU CAN DO TO PREVENT AND CONTROL RATS

GENERAL INFORMATION

ROOF RAT

The roof rat (*Rattus rattus*) is slender and agile, and the tail is longer than the head and body. Roof rats will enter buildings if given the opportunity, and often use utility lines and fences as runways. Roof rats prefer to feed on fruits, nuts, ivy, and pet food commonly found in residential areas.

NORWAY RAT

The Norway rat (*Rattus norvegicus*), is larger and more aggressive than the roof rat. The eyes and ears are smaller than the roof rat and the tail is shorter than the combined head and body length. This species usually lives in underground burrows, and feeds on garbage, meat scraps, cereal grains and vegetables.

ROOF RAT HABITAT

• Your home • Italian cypress • Algerian ivy • Juniper tams • Palm trees • Star jasmine • Yucca • Heavy shrubbery • Pampas grass • Wood and lumber piles • Honeysuckle • Storage boxes • Himalayan blackberries • Yard and garden storage sheds

Roof rats prefer to feed on:

• Walnuts • Pet food • Snails • Oranges • Avocados • Other ripe fruits • Grass seed • Bird seed • Vegetables • Ivy • Berries

The homeowner should be alert for these signs of roof rat activity:

- Damaged, partially eaten walnuts, oranges, avocados, or other fruits and nuts.
- Broken snail shells under bushes, on fences or near nesting sites.
- Signs of gnawing on plastic, wood or rubber materials.
- Greasy rub marks caused by the rat's oily fur coming in repeated contact with painted surfaces or wooden beams.
- Rat droppings are usually signs of significant rat activity. The droppings are randomly scattered and will normally be found close to a rat runway, feeding location, or near shelter. They are dark, spindle shaped, and are about 1/2 inch long.
- Visual sightings on utility cables, tops of fences, or in trees.
- Sounds (gnawing, etc..) from attic, sub-floor areas and wall spaces.
- Grease marks on beams caused by rat's oily fur

RAT CONTROL - ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT

Roof rat survival depends upon the existence of three basic environmental factors: **FOOD, WATER, and HABORAGE.**

Good environmental management practices, supplemented by the wise use of rodenticides are the most effective approach to roof rat control. Environmental sanitation and good housekeeping are the first steps in a successful rat control program.

The homeowner can help control rat populations by practicing the following:

1. Pick up fallen fruit and nuts on a daily basis.
2. Never leave uneaten pet food outside overnight.
3. Store wood and lumber piles on racks at least 18 inches above the ground and 12 inches away from walls.
4. Repair leaky faucets and eliminate any other unnecessary standing water.

TRAPPING

Trapping rodents is a perfectly acceptable method of control. Trapping is especially desirable when poisons cannot be used near food, small children, or where domestic animals or livestock are present. Traps should be used indoors to prevent the serious odor problems that can occur when poisoned rodents die in inaccessible areas.

Bait selection is important for trapping success. Peanut butter, nutmeats, bacon, pieces of apple, candy and moistened oatmeal are effective baits. For best results try several different baits to see which is most acceptable by rodents.

PLACEMENT

Placement of snap traps is crucial to their effectiveness. Place traps in areas frequented by rats. Rats establish run ways along fence tops, and next to walls. Look for the presence of rat droppings when placing snap traps. Place the narrow end of trap containing the trigger against a wall or known run way. Snap traps can also be attached to pipes or studs with wire, nail or screws.

HOW TO SET SNAP TRAPS

To set a snap trap, apply recommended bait to the trigger. Pull back the bail with your thumbs. Hold the bail in place with one thumb while attaching bar to the trigger tab. Place the trap as recommended above. Better results are usually obtained if two traps are set side by side. It is also a good idea to pre-bait, use a baited but unset trap so that the rodent can become familiar with the baited trap. This requires only two or three days after which the traps can be set.

CHEMICAL CONTROL (RAT BAITS)

Most rodenticides presently available for rat control are chronic anticoagulant formulations which require several consecutive feedings to reach lethal levels or newer acute anticoagulants which are usually lethal after a single feeding. All placed rodenticides must be checked often and replenished immediately when the supply is low. When the job is finished, uneaten rodenticides should be removed and disposed of according to the label.

PROPERTY OWNERS RESPONSIBILITY

The owner of the property on which the presence of rodents or evidence of rodent activity is found is responsible for the abatement of the nuisance and for the prevention of its recurrence. Through a home and yard evaluation, we inform the property owner of the presence of rodents and assist them in working out a satisfactory correction. In extreme cases, where the owner does not accept their responsibility to the public, the nuisance may be abated and a lien may be filed against the property as provided by the California State Health and Safety Code.

Remember, you have rats if your neighbor has rats!

You can host a block party in your neighborhood. An effective way to get rid of rats in your block is to work together with your neighbors. Organize and call the people in your block together. As a group, you can make a commitment to make your neighborhood a place where rats cannot survive. Once you are organized to get rid of rats in your block, you will find the same organization can be useful for other block projects. Cooperation works.

