

Rats in Gardens

Private contractors

If you feel that you need professional help and would like to pay for a private contractor then the following advice may assist you:

- Seek a contractor who is a member of the British Pest Control Association. You can contact them by calling 01332 294288 or by visiting www.bpca.org.uk
- Obtain three quotes, this will allow you to compare prices and value for money
- Always ask the contractor what the price will be for eradication (i.e. a fixed charge). Otherwise they may charge you per visit. A charge for eradication means you will know exactly what you are paying.



Contact us

If you have any questions about the information in this leaflet or would like professional advice please contact us:

Leeds City Council Corporate Call Centre - **0113 2224406**
Email - pests@leeds.gov.uk

Further information and copies of this leaflet can be found on the council's website:

www.leeds.gov.uk/pestcontrol



Leeds City Council offers an advisory service for the treatment of rats in gardens. This leaflet provides information to show how you can be more proactive to avoid rats entering your garden and on how to maintain a rat free environment.

If you are a council tenant you should call 0113 2224406 to report a problem with rats inside or outside your property.

About rats

Rats are very adaptable animals and have lived near man and his food supplies for hundreds of years.

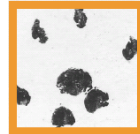
The most common species within the UK is the common or brown rat, which is physically strong, can jump up to three metres and can squeeze through a gap of less than 2.5cm. Rats will seek out any environment that provides food, water and shelter.



In gardens rats can be attracted by wild bird food, compost heaps, garden decking and collections of materials.

Rats can breed very quickly, a pair of rats can produce 60 or more young in one year. A young female rat will be ready to reproduce at the age of three months.

Example of a rats foot print
(size of a 5 pence piece)



Signs of rats

If you see any of the following then rats may be present:

- Droppings - these are cigar shaped and around 1cm in length
- Damage - rats have to gnaw constantly and as a result may cause damage to belongings, structures, pipes and electric cables etc...
- Smears - black greasy marks maybe left by rats running over prominent objects over a long period of time
- Holes - maybe seen in the garden, 5-7cm wide with a smooth shiny entry, indicating an active burrow

If you only see a rat once it is possible that they were just passing through. Rats are mobile creatures who are in constant search of food sources and shelter. This means they will often travel through land on their search. Monitoring your garden for the above signs will give you a better indication of whether an infestation exists.

Rat droppings compared
to a paper clip



Rat hole

A rat's teeth

Surrounding area

- Report any local refuse issues, waste areas and fly tipping to the council
- Report local businesses who have overflowing bins or who don't clear the rubbish their business or customers create e.g. local takeaways not clearing the food waste and litter left outside their premises



Preventing rats entering your property

To ensure a rat infestation in your garden does not enter your home you should repair any external structural faults, such as:

- Gaps beneath external doors – draught excluding brush or bristle strips can be attached to the door or the threshold can be renewed or raised
- Holes surrounding pipes – these can be blocked with wire wool and then filled with cement or expanding foam
- Damaged or old air vents - vents with holes larger than 2.5cm should be replaced, repaired or covered with fine mesh (DO NOT BLOCK AIR VENTS)



Traps

Break-back traps can be used for the control of rats outside, but the user must ensure that the traps are placed in a location and in such a way as to prevent the possibility of access by non-target species.

These should be placed next to walls where rats tend to travel. You should use several traps and check them daily, removing any dead rats immediately. The bodies should be bagged and disposed of in your black wheelie bin (wear gloves and wash hands thoroughly afterwards).

Traps can be baited with a variety of food but peanut butter, caramel, chocolate and fish based products tend to work best.

Cage traps

Cage traps baited with the same foods are effective but it is important to remember that the rats will be caught alive. It is the users responsibility to dispose of the trapped rats, which can and most likely will bite if given the opportunity.

PLEASE NOTE - It is illegal to knowingly release a live trapped rat. Always read the instructions provided with traps.

Neighbours

If you feel you are doing all you can to avoid problems with rats outdoors, then it may well be that neighbouring properties are the cause. The following tips may help resolve this situation:

- Speak to the person causing the problem - a polite word to explain the problem often resolves the matter easily
- Write to the person causing the problem - they may respond better to a letter
- Contact the landlord - if you are a council tenant, or the problems are arising from a council tenant, there may be action available under the terms of the tenancy agreement. Your housing office can give you further advice.
- Contact the council's environmental action team - they can investigate complaints where activity at one property significantly affects people living nearby



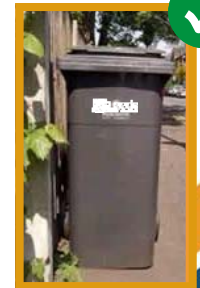
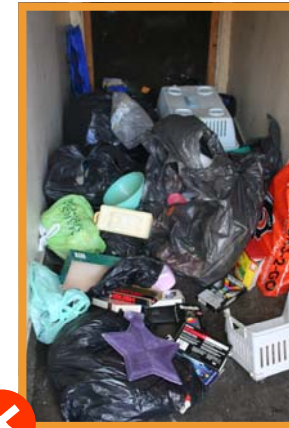
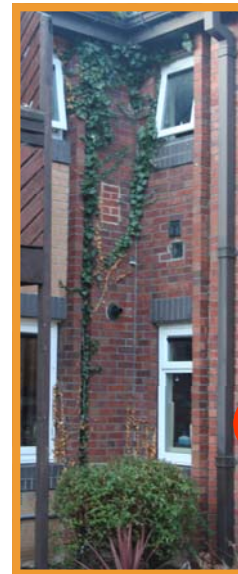
How to prevent rats

There are many things you can do to avoid having a problem with rats, many of them are simple and are things you can do in your day to day life.

Environment

You can ensure your garden environment is less attractive to rats by:

- Removing any accumulated refuse, stockpiles of materials and plain old junk as rats may use these to live in
- Preventing outdoor pets creating a food source for rats. Store their food indoors and attach a board to the front of their cage to catch discarded food and stop it falling on to the floor
- Avoiding the build up of domestic refuse outside your property by using suitable containers such as wheeled bins and ensuring they are emptied regularly
- Keeping you garden tidy, rats can soon make a home in untidy or overgrown gardens (especially if there is a local food source).
- Cutting tree branches so they do not overhang your property. Wall climbing plants should be trimmed and not allowed to reach from ground to roof level



Bird feeding

Wild bird feeding is now one of the most common reasons for rat infestations around homes. To reduce attraction of rats to your garden you should:

- Use suspended wire feeders with trays attached for waste
- Not put bird food directly on the ground
- Only put out enough bird food for the day and clear any spillages
- Guidelines are provided by the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds. You can contact them by calling 01273 775333 or by visiting www.rspb.org.uk



Compost bins

Compost bins are a good way of recycling waste but can have the potential to attract rats. To reduce the risk of a rat infestation you should:

- Place a compost bin on a wire base which will allow organisms that aid the composting process in but will keep rodents out
- Renew damaged compost bins or compost heaps as they can provide a home to rats
- Not put household food waste such as meat and cooked food in compost bins
- Compost items such as fruit, leaves, general garden and vegetable waste



Example of how to lay poison safely



Control measures

If you already have rats in your garden you may need to consider hiring professional help (see back page for details). Alternatively you can control the problem yourself using poison or traps and following our advice.

Rodenticides

Rodenticides (poison suitable for rodent control) can be purchased from various supermarkets and garden centres.

When using rodenticides outside, you should ensure that it is safe from children, pets and wildlife as well as protecting it from the weather. To do this you can purchase a rat box from most supermarkets, garden centres and from the internet or you can make your own by using a piece of drain pipe.

Baits should be laid in several locations (up to 100gms) where rats have been seen. These should be checked every 4-5 days and replenished accordingly until no further poison is taken. Dead rats will contain poison and should be buried.

Important – when using poisons always read the label before use and follow instructions at all times.

If you are concerned about using poisons or require further advice then you can contact Leeds City Council.