

RAT BIOLOGY

The Norway Rat

our most common rat

Description:

Size - Adults are 12-18 inches long with a tail

5-8 inches long.

Fur - Normally their fur is brown to reddish gray

in the back and grayish-white on the belly.

Body type - They are heavy set with a sparsely

haired tail, blunt nose, and ears which are short,

hairy and set closely to the head.

Droppings - feces are capsule shaped and up to

3/4" long.

Reproduction:

Breeding season - Breeding peaks in the Spring &

Fall in this region.

Gestation period - The average term of pregnancy is 22

days

Litter size - Females have 6-12 young per litter.

Number of litters - Females have 4-7 litters per year.

Number of young reared - A single female normally

produces about 40 young per year but only half of these live to be weaned.

Maturation - Young begin to take solid food at 3 weeks

and attain sexual maturity at 3 months.

Life span - Rats live to an average of one year

Habits:

Harborage - Norway rats live in burrows 12-18 inches below

the ground and under 3 feet in length.

Range - a rat normally lives within 100-150 feet of its

food source.

Feeding - They are omnivorous and seek food & water

primarily during the night. They prefer eating in

protected areas. Since their teeth constantly grow,

rats must gnaw frequently.

NOTE: The Roof Rat is less common in this area. It is smaller

and lives above the ground level.

GENERAL SUMMARY

Rats are wide spread pests which are specifically adapted to live in the human environment. They cause damage in agricultural areas, food handling & processing establishments, and residential areas. They tolerate our activities and can carry disease to both humans and domestic animals due to their close proximity and association with us.

Since their reproductive potential is high, control is needed. Rat numbers are affected by food availability, habitat quality, competition, and predation. Our lifestyles and wasteful habits often benefit the rat. Therefore, we must take appropriate measures to reduce the rat population as much as possible.

Please note:

While following the guidelines of this informational pamphlet, remember that rats do not recognize property boundaries. Neighbors will need to work in cooperation with one another to best assure the elimination of a given rat infestation.

**For more information please contact
your area sanitarian with the
Bureau of Regional Community Services**

Eastern area - call 887-7128

Western area - call 887-1161

or 887-1147

Sanitarian: _____



**FIGHT THE
RAT**

**BALTIMORE COUNTY
DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL
PROTECTION AND RESOURCE
MANAGEMENT**

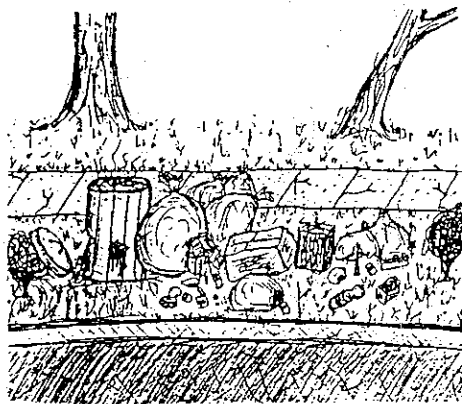


RAT FOOD SOURCES

The main attraction for rats

GARBAGE

- Use rodent-proof containers with tight fitting lids for garbage and trash
- plastic bags of garbage should be set outside only just before the scheduled trash collection time(s).



PET FOOD/MANURE

- Where possible feed dogs & cats indoors
- if the pet is kept & fed outside, remove left-over food immediately after feedings.
- remove manure daily

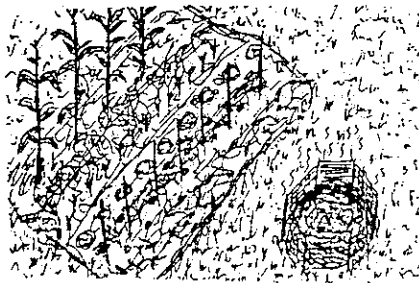


WILD BIRD AND ANIMAL FEED

- keep bird & animal feed off the ground.
- bird feeders should have high sides or a catch tray.
- do not feed table scraps or pet foods to wild animals

COMPOST PILES

- these should only consist of grass clippings, leaves, flower cuttings and fertilizers
- do not add food scraps, vegetables or fruit, garbage or animal waste.



GARDENS

- remove fallen fruits or vegetables
- stake or tie up plants where possible.
- regularly remove ripened fruits or vegetables from gardens

RAT HARBORAGES

Where rats seek refuge or live

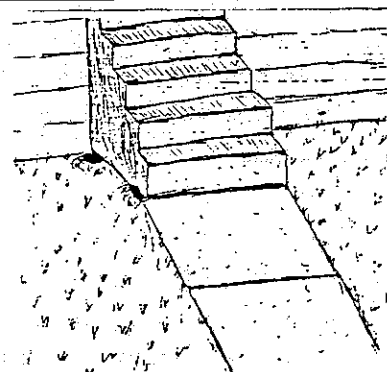
LOCATE THEIR HOME

- The common Norway Rat prefers to live underground in burrows.
- These burrows often are made alongside building structures, fences, walkways, patios, sheds, and under low decks.
- In additions, rats prefer burrowing into dirt embankments and areas providing heavy cover.



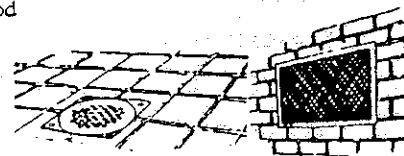
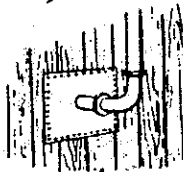
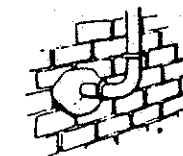
REMOVE THEIR REFUGE OR HIDING PLACES

- Remove unnecessary junk and debris from the premises.
- Materials stored outside should be kept on a hard, cleanable surface (i.e. concrete, asphalt, block, etc.) or elevated at least 18" above the ground.
- Always maintain outside areas in good sanitary condition.



ELIMINATE ACCESS TO DWELLINGS

- Close outer openings of the building with rodent-proof materials such as 1/4 inch wire mesh (hardware cloth), sheet metal, or concrete.
- Check to see that doors & windows close tightly.
- Seal gaps around pipes and any openings in the foundation. Also, fasten down floor drain grates.
- Remember that rats can squeeze into openings as small as 1/2 inch in diameter and can gnaw through wood and other soft materials.
- Rats (especially the less common Roof Rat) can climb and can swim through sewer pipes.



TO ELIMINATE THE RAT

Follow these steps in order:

FIRST

Look for and eliminate all possible rat food sources in your yard It is food that attracts and then supports rats in an area.

SECOND

Reduce possible rat harborages from the outside property and inspect the house or building for possible rat entry ways and block them.

THIRD

Poison and/or trap the rats. Both methods for killing rats are only effective when other food sources no longer exist. Then, rats are more likely to eat the poison bait or the bait on a trap.

- Poisoning: Locate where the rats are living and use a stick to push the poison bait packet deep into the burrow. Cover the hole with dirt. Inspect daily and rebait if holes reopen. Continue to rebait until all holes remain closed. Follow rodenticide label instructions carefully and never leave the rat poison out exposed & accessible to children, pets, or wildlife.

- Trapping: Snap traps and glue boards can be used. The snap trap is best for outside. Bait traps with fresh food such as meat, chicken, fish, peanut butter, fruit, or grain. Place traps along the pathways used by rats.

For additional information about rodent problems call a certified pest control operator or our offices.

