

CONTROLLING RATS



This brochure gives you tips on how to identify if you have rats, the potential health risks rats carry and how to avoid rats nesting in your home.

Rats

The unwelcome guests

Rats are a household pest that can cause significant damage when they invade your property. The damage is caused by a rat's desire to gnaw on almost anything to keep its teeth sharp.

Rats gnaw on things like household doors, skirtings, upholstery, books, food containers and packaging, equipment parts and machinery. Rats can even gnaw through electrical wires and cables, leading to a loss of service and short-circuiting of telephone and electrical systems and in some extreme cases, fire.

How to tell if you have rats

If you think you have rats or mice in your home, check for the following signs:

- noises in the ceiling or wall cavities – including scratching, running and gnawing sounds
- small, black, thin droppings along walls and fences
- run marks such as dusty trails or greasy marks along walls caused by their fur
- an unusual, unpleasant smell
- gnaw marks on things around your home like wood, soap, and food containers.

Remember that rats are more noticeable in the cooler months because they venture inside to nest and shelter in warm houses.

Health risks caused by rats

Rats pose a serious health risk to humans because they can carry and transmit disease.

Rats can spread disease by:

- contaminating food or cooking utensils with their urine or faeces, often causing salmonella food poisoning in humans
- infecting the human bloodstream with disease causing pathogens.

Thanks to modern hygiene standards, improved sanitation and advances in urban planning, epidemics caused by rat-spread diseases are rare.

Pest rats

The two types of pest rats most commonly found in Brisbane are the large brown sewer rat (*Rattus norvegicus*), and the smaller grey or black climbing rat (*Rattus rattus*). Both of these types of rats can carry disease. The sewer rat nests and burrows under buildings and is usually found in commercial farms rather than suburban areas. Climbing rats are likely to be found nesting in homes.



Dedicated to a better Brisbane



Did you know?

- Rats breed all year round.
- Female rats start breeding when they are only a few months old.
- Rats live for an average of three to five years.
- Rats can produce between three to 12 litters of pinkies (baby rats) per year.
- On average, each litter has 10 baby rats.
- Based on these figures, one male and female rat could produce up to 250,000 offspring in just three years.

Permanent control of rats

To permanently control rats on your property and stop them breeding, implement the following tips:

- repair any breakage or holes in wall linings and roof cavities immediately
- restrict rats running up building pipes by placing metal gauze over the ends
- trim overhanging tree branches near your roof so rats can't use them to get onto your roof.

It is more effective to rat-proof your home after completing a baiting program.

How to stop rats

Rats eat almost anything and are usually most active at night. The following tips will help you to prevent your home from damage and stop rats from nesting.

To keep rats and mice away from your garden:

- keep poultry and animal food in metal bins with tight lids
- don't leave your pet's food out for longer than 20 minutes
- pick up fallen macadamia nuts if you have a tree – they are one of the rat's favourite foods
- throw your household rubbish into a bin with a lid
- stack any timber and boxes at least 30 cm above the ground and at least one metre from walls
- if you have a compost bin, consider burying it at least 30 cm below the ground
- check poultry pens and large bird cages regularly for signs of rats. Rats are attracted to the feed bins and water containers.

To keep rats and mice from inside your home:

- regularly check for holes and block any that you find. An adult rat can squeeze through a hole in a ceiling or wall as small as a five cent coin
- always keep your cupboard doors closed
- store food and leftovers in sealed containers.



Eliminating rats using baits and traps

There are many rat baits and traps available at supermarkets, hardware stores and produce outlets. Care should be taken to ensure all baits are used in compliance with the manufacturer's instructions and kept out of reach of children at all times.

Read the instructions before you start using the traps, then place them wherever you see evidence of rats, for example, droppings and gnawed items.

Council's rat dog service

Brisbane City Council's qualified pest management team use specially trained fox terriers to investigate rat problems. The dogs are mainly used to trace rats in commercial areas and backyards.

Reporting rat infestations

If you believe your property or a property nearby is harbouring rats, contact Council on **(07) 3403 8888**.

A Council officer will investigate the site and advise you or the property owner on how they can control the problem.

For more information visit www.brisbane.qld.gov.au and search 'getting rid of rats and mice' or call Council on **(07) 3403 8888**.

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