

## ▶ CONTROL MEASURES

▶ **HYGIENE MANAGEMENT** It is essential that basic housekeeping is good. All food sources should be removed and refuse kept in covered containers, preferably rodent proof ones. Sources of water such as dripping taps and leaky pipes must also be removed. Proofing of the building is essential to prevent rodents re-entering the premises. This is by means of blocking up any holes where service pipes enter the premises, any holes behind kitchen cupboards, ensuring that there are no gaps between floors skirtings and floor boards, ensure that doors fit properly, or have bristle strips or steel plates fitted to them. Air vents should be covered with a metal mesh, which will prevent rodents getting in but still allow air through. Ensure that any holes under the eaves etc are filled or meshed, any drain breaks are correctly repaired to prevent sewer rats getting into the property.

▶ **RODENTICIDAL TREATMENT** The only effective way to deal with an infestation in the first place is by using these to kill off the population. Different types of bait are available and they have differing degrees of success on each of the three species. When treating **mice**, lots of small bait feeding stations are necessary, as mice are curious and move from food source to food source. However if the bait is not palatable to them, or they have access to better food, then they will not take the bait, and therefore it will not be effective in controlling the infestation. **Rats**, on the other hand, have to get used to anything that is new and will not feed from a bait station until they have got used to it being there. Therefore it does tend to take a little longer to start treating a rat infestation with the use of bait. It is therefore essential to ensure that any possible food sources are denied. Lack of success in controlling an infestation, is usually down to poor application of the baits and poor housekeeping methods. Once these two points have been corrected, then if there are still no takes then you may have to try an alternative type of bait. If you only have an odd mouse or rat that have come in from the outside then you can use traps. A mousetrap is more effective if you use a small piece of something tempting like a small piece of chocolate or KITKAT.

N.B. Rodenticides can be harmful to pets and children and great care must be taken to ensure that they are handled and placed correctly. If you have a large infestation, then it would be advisable to consider getting a professional pest controller in to carry out treatment for you.

Babergh District Council does offer a service for the treatment of rodents. If you should wish to make an appointment for someone to carry out treatment for you, then you should contact our pest control service on **01473 822801**. There will be a charge for the treatment of rodents.

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The Natural & Built  
Environment Division

## ▶ ADVICE TO HOUSEHOLDERS ON RODENT CONTROL

### ▶ Babergh District Council

[www.babergh.gov.uk/babergh/pests](http://www.babergh.gov.uk/babergh/pests)

This document can be made available on audio tape, in Braille, large print or an alternative language upon request by telephoning 01473 822801

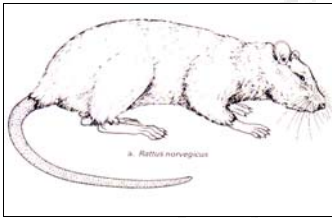
# ► Advice to Householders on Rodent Control

## ► CHARACTERISTICS

**Rodent** comes from the Latin word *rodere*, which means to gnaw. This name has been given to them because their front incisor teeth are deeply embedded in the jaws and grow continuously. They must therefore be kept at an effective length and sharpened by continual use. Behind the incisors on either side, there is a gap through which rodents can eject unwanted or unpalatable material before it is ground up by the molar teeth and swallowed.



◀ **The house mouse** is brownish grey in colour, the body is 80-100mm long, and so is its tail. It weighs between 14 and 20 grams; it has a slender and small build, a pointed nose, large hairy ears and pink feet. Its droppings are small, spindle shaped or irregular.



◀ **The common rat** is also brownish-grey in colour with grey belly fur, it is between 200 and 270mm in length with tail length of between 165 – 205mm. It weighs between 200 and 500 grams, has a large and thickset build, a blunt nose, short, thick, opaque, finely haired ears, and grey feet. The droppings tend to be 'banana' or 'sausage' shaped.



◀ **The ship rat** can be grey-black, brown or tawny, and may have white belly fur. Their bodies are between 145 and 200mm in length with a tail length of 250mm. They have a slender and streamlined build, a pointed nose; its ears are large, thin, translucent and almost hairless, with pink feet. The droppings are ellipsoid or spindle shaped.

## ► BEHAVIOUR

**Rats** are intelligent and social animals. They live in colonies, which may be several hundred strong. They can jump, swim, climb and prefer to move under the cover of darkness. They have a strong tendency to burrow, especially into soil or under secure coverings such as a pile of rocks. They are frequently found living near water, by drains, along ditches, streams and sewers. Occasionally they live inside buildings in spaces between walls, in lofts or beneath piles of rubbish. Due to their agility, they can squeeze through small openings and it is very difficult to keep them out.



Their wide-ranging habitat means that they are never far away from human activities and will infest anywhere that has a suitable food supply for them. An infestation can build up rapidly without you knowing about it, as they are more active at night. If you do see a rat during the day then it is usually an indication that there is a large colony nearby.

**Rats** establish runs, which are regularly used to travel from their nest to their food and water supply. These runs are useful in determining where to lay bait by following them, finding droppings, gnaw marks, grease smears, and footprints. However they do not like new things, and as a result, they may not take bait from a bait station right away, they need to get used to it being there.

**Mice**, on the other hand, are quite inquisitive creatures, and lots of small bait stations will attract their attention, providing it tastes good. Mice can be more of a problem than rats, as they tend to live indoors more than rats. They are therefore more likely to cause more damage to foodstuffs and cables through their constant gnawing. They can get through a gap as small as 6mm and will build their nests in areas that are difficult to get to and colonies can grow at an alarming rate.

## ► SIGNIFICANCE

Rats and mice carry diseases including salmonella, Leptospirosis (Weil's disease), Murine typhus, viruses, parasites, Brucellosis, Aujeszky's disease and foot and mouth disease. Whilst disease transmission to man from rats is a potential problem, it is a greater risk to farm animals. Rats are a major hazard to livestock production, especially pigs, calves & poultry. Control must be a top priority.

In man the main risk is from leptospirosis. This is a water-borne disease and is caused by the ingestion of the bacteria; this can be either through an open cut or sore in the skin or by swallowing. The bacteria are passed on via contact with the rats' urine.

## ► LIFE CYCLE

**Rats:** A healthy female can produce up to five litters a year each consisting of between 8-10 young. The pregnancy lasts for 21 days and the offspring can reach maturity in 8-12 weeks. As many as 30% of females in a colony can be pregnant at one time.

**Mice:** These follow a very similar pattern to the rats, however young mice reach sexual maturity after only 42 days and thus can increase the size of their colony much quicker than the rat.

Continued overleaf ►