

Rats and mice



The two most common rodent pests in properties are the common rat and the house mouse.

The house mouse is common in a wide range of buildings in the countryside, towns and cities. The house mouse can be confused with three other species of mouse found in Britain and we will, where possible identify the type of rodent present.

The common rat has only been present in Britain since the early 18th century. It is thought to have been introduced to the UK from Russia. It is the most common rat and is found in both the countryside and in towns and cities. It lives indoors and outdoors and is the species associated with sewers. The ship or black rat is rare in this country and is usually only found in areas around ports.

Rats and mice have very similar life cycles. They can reproduce from the age of about three months, and may breed throughout the year. Rats and mice can be found in homes, gardens, sheds and garages.

The most obvious signs of a rat or mouse infestation include droppings, signs of gnawing or chewed material, footprints in damp soil or dust, and burrows in the ground.

Problems caused by rats and mice

- They eat and contaminate all types of food.
- They damage and destroy property. Their front teeth (incisors) grow continuously and so have to be worn away by gnawing. They can gnaw through all types of wood, and through soft metals such as aluminium or lead.

- They constantly urinate and leave droppings as they move around.
- They carry diseases (such as typhus, trichinosis, plague, jaundice, Weil's disease and so on) that are harmful to both humans and animals



What can be done

If you think you have rats or mice, and you are not able to resolve the problem by using products available in shops or DIY stores, then you should get help from a professional pest control contractor.

A pest-control contractor will normally carry out a survey of the property, and decide if treatment is needed.

Sometimes the contractor might think it is more appropriate to carry out the treatment somewhere else. For example, when the nest has been found to be at another premises.

Treatment is usually in the form of poison baits. Sometimes dusts will be used to try and track where the rats and mice are coming from.

The contractor should tell you where the baits have been placed and let you know how the treatment is progressing.

You should be given safety advice on the treatment, and be left an information sheet telling you what to do in an emergency. The contractor may offer you advice on hygiene and action you can take to prevent future infestations.

Preventing infestations

- A build-up of waste material and rubbish can attract rodents. Make sure you dispose of all waste (especially food waste) appropriately.
- If you keep other animals, good hygiene is important. Regularly clean any food waste or spills, and store feed in sealed containers.
- Stored materials should ideally be at least 18 inches off the ground. Products should also be kept away from walls.
- If you use a compost bin, ideally it should be an enclosed bin fitted with a rodent proof base to prevent burrowing. Open compost heaps are not recommended.

- If you feed the birds, try not to put out too much food. If you use a bird table, clean the floor below the table so that food debris does not build up.
- If you have wooden decking in the garden, try to prevent food from falling underneath .

If we think it is necessary, we can issue formal notices to make occupiers take steps to get rid of rodents.

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If you would like this information in large print, Braille or another language phone us on

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