



WEST OXFORDSHIRE  
DISTRICT COUNCIL

# Preventing problems with rats around your home

Rats can carry diseases, as well as fleas, mites and ticks, and pose a significant risk to people. It is therefore important to deal with infestations as soon as possible, whether inside or outside your home.

## Signs of a rat problem

Rats are normally nocturnal and usually hide from humans. Typical signs are:

- Scratching noises - in walls, under floors or decking.
- Droppings - dark, tapered droppings about 10-14mm long.
- Smell - an ammonia-like smell, particularly strong in enclosed areas (under cupboards, loft areas etc).
- Ripped food packaging/bite marks - rats will tear open packets to find food. You may also see teeth marks in food or on wooden or plastic items, from where rats have gnawed.
- Nests - these will be built in warm, hidden places with shredded material such as newspaper, plastic and fabrics.
- Burrows - in gardens, burrows are likely to be in compost heaps or under sheds. Check for nests under garden decking.

## Keeping rats away

### Outside:

- Store all rubbish in closed containers and take care over what food you put into composters.
- Check that your drains are in good order as rats can come up from sewers through broken pipes.
- Use squirrel-proof bird feeders and clear up spilt bird food.
- Check areas around sheds and decking for signs of infestation.

### Your home:

- Repair holes in buildings and outhouses.
- Investigate fitting mesh to ventilation points, but seek professional advice to ensure airflow is not constricted.
- Store food in air-tight plastic or metal containers and regularly clean under cookers and fridges.

## Dealing with rats

If not treated, a rat infestation can quickly take hold.

DIY treatments are available for purchase from local stores. However it is advisable to seek professional help. Look for products containing the active ingredient bromadiolone or difenacoum to ensure the most effective treatment.

It is essential to follow instructions carefully for safe use and to ensure humane control of rats. Rat traps are powerful and should only be used in areas that children, pets and wildlife cannot reach.

If you think your neighbours are affected by the same infestation, join forces with them to have it dealt with.

### How the Council can help

West Oxfordshire District Council can help by:

- Providing **free** telephone advice
- Surveying premises for infestations (chargeable service)
- Providing treatment (chargeable service)
- Enforcing the law where a landowner or occupier is not treating an infestation.
- Investigating the source of a rat problem if unknown and making the person(s) responsible take action.
- Liaising with Thames Water over sewer infestations. Please contact the Council if you think there is a problem involving sewers.

**For advice or information on treatments:**

**Call: 01993 861000**

**Visit: [www.westoxon.gov.uk/pestcontrol](http://www.westoxon.gov.uk/pestcontrol)**

*The Council's Home Improvement Agency Small Repairs Service may be able to help if repair work is required on your home following pest control treatment. The service is available to West Oxfordshire residents over 60 or with a disability in*



*West Oxfordshire. Call 01993 861000 for more information.*