

# RODENT CONTROL

## RATS AND MICE

The Adelaide Hills provide an ideal habitat for rats and mice due to the proliferation of vegetation, food and water. Complete control is difficult, however, a number of relatively simple measures can be taken to minimise problems.

Rodents may be destructive and are capable of spreading disease. They are most active at night although they may be seen during the day when numbers are high and food is in short supply.

Signs of Infestation include:

- Droppings
- Signs of runways through the vegetation/garden
- Burrows under vegetation, rubbish, wood piles, or
- Any other stored materials
- Gnawing of wood, plastic and wiring
- Tracks (oily smears from their coats along walls)
- Food disappearing
- Unpleasant odours in confined spaces
- Excessive noise at night

Rats have a keen sense of smell, whilst their eyesight is poor. Using a highly developed sense of touch rats run close to walls and fences. This enables them to move quickly in the dark and explains the grubby, oily smears often seen around the edges of a room.

Debris such as snail shells with the sides eaten out, almond shells, etc left in the corners of sheds and other secluded spots, also signs of fruit and vegetables being eaten are a good sign that rats may be present.

## DISCOURAGING RATS

The most effective control method is to prevent rodents gaining entry to your home or business. This is best considered at the construction stage, however you can still block entry by sealing gaps around windows and doors greater than 6 mm wide with silicon sealer, metal flashing or timber moulding sealing around pipe penetrations or flues with mortar, metal sheet or fine metal mesh (mesh size less than 6mm) using pipe guards on downpipes and flues to prevent rodents from climbing using rodent proof fencing, or elevated grain storage in rural areas smooth rendering walls down to the floor or providing a 150 mm strip of hard gloss paint at the base of walls, again to prevent rodents from climbing providing steel kick plates at the base of doors and door frames to prevent gnawing using single leaf construction in food stores to prevent access through the cavity

To discourage rats from living with us it is necessary to deprive them of sources of food and harbourage (shelter). Rats will generally travel about 40-50m from food and water.

Common food sources include:

- Pet food – tinned food, dry food, meats and pellets
- Fruit and vegetables – on the trees/plants and on the ground
- Nuts – almonds, walnuts etc
- Grain/Seeds - including that fed to poultry and birds
- Composting materials
- Vegetable scraps
- Snails, worms, insects

Harbourage areas include areas that are undisturbed or hidden such as

- Garages and storage sheds
- Behind stored materials (Boxes, wood piles)
- Thick vegetation
- Ceiling space
- Under floors

You can encourage rodents to move elsewhere by making your property an undesirable place to live. An undesirable habitat is created by cleaning up all spills of food or water, however small storing grains or foods in sealed plastic or metal containers storing grains or foods at least 200 mm off the floor removing all rubbish and waste removing weeds and long grass pruning trees and shrubs off the ground and at least one metre from buildings storing building materials and timber in tidy stacks, avoiding formation of cavities removing water sources such as water bowls for pets, dripping taps, pooling in poorly-fitted guttering and saucers under pot plants screening access points to rainwater tanks and over garden ponds

## **GETTING RID OF RATS**

The first step is to talk to your neighbours to find out the extent of the infestation. Encourage them to also lay baits and remove sources of harbourage and food from their properties. Treating at the same time will be more effective in eradicating rats.

The next step is to identify where rats are running and select suitable sites for the placement of poisoned baits or traps. To encourage rats to eat from baits/traps access to sources of other food should be removed before commencing treatment.

## **USE OF BAITS**

Baits are a simple and effective way to get rid of rats. Rat baits are readily available from most hardware stores. Extreme care must be used when handling baits as they are generally toxic to humans and household pets.

**Always read and follow the directions on the packaging.**

All solid baits are best used inside bait stations, for the protection of pets and to encourage the rodents to feed where they feel protected. This may be a manufactured bait station or an improvised box, tube, pipe or bag with an entry and exit point. The bait station should be located in a dark, protected area with all other food sources removed.

## **TRAPS**

Rats traps are also available from most hardware stores. Traps are also safe for use where pets are around. Set the traps in dark corners with the trigger side close to the wall, using a number of traps similar to that of the anticipated number of rodents. The reason for several traps is that rats learn very quickly; if they see another rat dead in a trap then they will not go near traps again. It is important therefore, to trap all the rats present at the same time and to remove dead rats immediately.

Where bait stations are used, they should be checked at least every other day and replenished as required. Baiting should continue until the bait is no longer being taken.

Where the infestation is large, the most effective approach is to employ the services of a professional pest control company. Arranging this in conjunction with neighbours is likely to result in better outcomes and may result in a better price for each participant

**For Further Information Contact  
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