

## INFORMATION SHEET

### An Environmental Protection Team Service



#### **Rat**

*Rattus norvegicus*

The common rat typically has brown fur on its back and grey underneath, although variations occur. Body length is 200-270 mm plus a tail of 150-200 mm. Rats live anywhere that provides them with food, water and shelter. In houses, they live in loft spaces, wall cavities, cellars or under floorboards. They burrow into compost heaps and grassy banks or under sheds. They also live in sewer systems

Sightings of rats or their droppings would indicate an infestation. Their droppings are 12mm long and taper at both ends. Rats follow the same routes and leave trails through grass and low vegetation. Footprints, tail swipes and smears from repeated contact with rat fur or burrows in banks, under tree roots, at the edge of paving or nests under floorboards or in lofts would also indicate their presence. Rats also gnaw continually, even on non-food items, to wear down their front teeth.

Rats will eat anything humans eat. Most of the damage is from ripped packaging, but they foul the food with urine and droppings. Rats need to be controlled because they can transmit diseases to humans, including Salmonella (food poisoning) and Weils Disease. Damage is also done to buildings and other structures by their gnawing and burrowing activities.

Rats are adaptable, highly mobile and breed quickly. This combination means that they are very difficult to control by an untrained person.

Residents can also help prevent rats multiplying by removing potential nesting sites by keeping their house and garden clean and tidy and cutting back overgrown vegetation. Not feeding the wild birds to excess or leaving out household waste where they can get to it would also help.

**ALWAYS FOLLOW THE INSTRUCTIONS ON THE LABEL WHEN USING PESTICIDES**

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