

## **DESCRIPTION**

Britain is home to two kinds of rats:

- The common rat (or brown rat)
- The ship rat (or black rat)

The adult common rat may weigh from 100 to 500 grammes and has brown fur on its back and grey underneath; its tail is shorter than its head or body. The ship rat, which is far less common, is smaller and more lightly built weighing only between 100 and 300 grammes; it may have black or brown fur, has large almost furless ears and has a tail which is longer than the head and body giving it greater agility.

## **DISTRIBUTION**

The common rat is the most abundant and widespread species and can be found anywhere that offers shelter and food - including sewers. They are efficient burrowers and favour compost heaps and the ground underneath hedges and sheds where they will dig shallow burrows and form nests with dry grass and leaves. In houses they will nest in wall cavities and beneath floor boards. Ship rats will normally be found indoors, mainly in port areas, but they

may be transported inland with cargo. Being agile climbers and jumpers, ship rats will often nest in roof spaces and upper floors.

## **SIGNIFICANCE**

Rats are a major hazard to health. They spread many forms of disease, some of which can be fatal to man such as Weil's disease. They may eat food which is intended for human consumption and they often damage much more which has to be discarded. Through their gnawing habit they also cause considerable structural damage to woodwork, waterpipes, electric cables and so on.

## **LIFE CYCLE**

The life expectancy of rats is around one year during which time a female will typically breed five times, with an average litter of between seven and eight. Breeding occurs throughout the year but especially in Spring and Autumn.

## **MICE**

Mice too can carry disease, spoil food and damage belongings. Their habits are

similar in many ways to rats, but on a smaller scale.

## **CONTROL**

You will need professional help in controlling colonies of rats and mice. Their ability to burrow, jump and climb and the speed with which they breed and form new colonies make them difficult to control.

You can assist us by ensuring that your premises are in good repair making it difficult for rats to gain access, and by removing any sources of food and water or clearing areas which may offer shelter or nesting materials such as piles of timber or any areas of your garden which are overgrown.

In the event of an infestation, our Pest Control Officer will visit and survey the area to determine the most appropriate control measures which may include the laying of poison baits along rat runs and in the drainage system.

The baits must be left undisturbed and will be examined by an officer when a revisit is made.

## **SAFETY**

All pesticides are applied by our qualified and experience staff to ensure the safety

of the public and to minimise damage to the environment.

## **LAW**

The Council are obliged to take steps to keep their area free from rats and mice, under the Prevention of Damage by Pests Act 1949. That Act also gives Councils powers to require landowners to treat infestations and to remove materials likely to harbour rats. Landowners are obliged to report 'substantial' infestations to the Council.

Food businesses have to keep their premises free of rodent infestation. Many have professional contract services.

Certain rat-borne diseases are notifiable to the local authority (your Doctor will know which ones).

## **SERVICE**

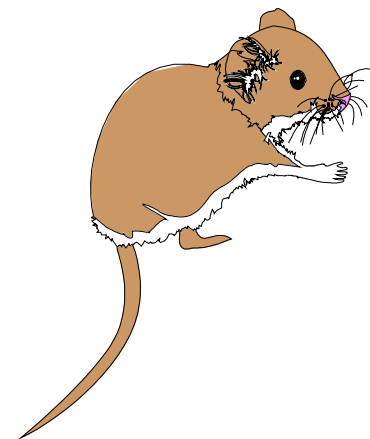
The Council offer a free and discrete service to domestic residents of North Warwickshire for the control of rodents (and other pests, such as fleas and bedbugs). Queries or requests for service should be made by telephoning 01827 715341, or on fax to 719399, or by asking at the Council Offices reception or writing to;

**Assistant Director  
[Regulatory] Environmental Health  
Division  
Old Bank House  
129 Long Street  
Atherstone  
Warks CV9 1AB**

Or Email  
[davidbaxendale@northwarks.gov.uk](mailto:davidbaxendale@northwarks.gov.uk)

## **NORTH WARWICKSHIRE BOROUGH COUNCIL**

### **ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH DIVISION**



## **RATS AND MICE**