

Rats

Knowsley Council Pest Control Service



Rats

Rats will seek out any environment that provides food, water and shelter. The most common UK species is the common or brown rat which can contaminate any food it touches with diseases which can be transmitted to humans.

Rat gnawing and burrowing can damage buildings and other structures. Rats can breed very quickly; a pair of rats can produce 60 or more young in one year. A young female rat will be ready to breed at three months old.

The brown rat can squeeze through a gap of less than 25mm and is attracted by wild bird food and compost heaps.

Signs to look out for around your home

Rats are extremely mobile creatures constantly searching for food and shelter.

Rats will nest and live in cellars, loft spaces, wall cavities or under floor boards and can burrow under grassy banks, in compost heaps or under sheds. Signs of rats include:

- Cigar-shaped droppings about 10mm long
- Signs of gnawing - damage on fruit, vegetables, wood or electric cables
- Footprints, tail swipes or dark grey smears from rat fur left on surfaces
- Burrow holes - between 7 - 120mm - found under tree roots, drain cover surrounds, grassy banks and the edges of paving

How to prevent rats

There are many simple things you can do to prevent rats:

- Clear up food spillages immediately and move household refuse outside regularly
- Use suitable containers such as wheeled bins and ensure they are put out for collection regularly
- Don't leave pet food outdoors and remove suspended, wire bird feeders to ensure no bird food is left on the ground
- Repair external structural faults to your home, holes around pipes or cover damaged air vents with fine mesh. (Vents with holes larger than 25mm should be replaced. **DO NOT BLOCK AIR VENTS**)
- Install draught excluders or raise thresholds to fill gaps beneath external doors
- Remove any accumulated rubbish as rats can make a home in untidy homes and gardens, especially if there is a local food source
- Don't put food waste in compost bins. Place compost bins on a wire base to keep rodents out and replace any cracked or damaged bins



Treating and controlling rats

Knowsley Council Pest Control Service offers a service for the treatment of rats in domestic and commercial properties. Alternatively, you can control the problem with rodent poison (rodenticides) and traps.

Poisons (rodenticides) are poisons suitable for rodent control and can be bought from supermarkets and garden centres. When using rat poisons always read the instructions, keep out of reach of children, pets and wildlife - and protect from the weather.

It is advisable to use a rat box, which can be bought or made from a piece of drain pipe. Lay baits in several locations and replenish every 4 - 5 days until no further poison is taken. Poisoned dead rats should be buried.

Traps should be placed next to walls where rats travel and must be checked daily with dead rats removed immediately. The most effective baits are peanut butter, caramel, chocolate and fish-based products.

Cage traps baited with food are effective but the rats will be caught alive. It is your responsibility to dispose of trapped rats - which may bite.

IMPORTANT: Always refer to product or handling instructions when using traps or poisons **BEFORE USE**. Ensure traps and poisons are kept away from children, pets and other wildlife.

Please note: It is illegal to release a live, trapped rat.

Further help and guidance

Knowsley Council Pest Control Service offers competitive rates for the treatment of rats in domestic properties. Please contact us for commercial rates.

For further information ring **0151 443 2400** or visit **www.knowsley.gov.uk/residents/bins-waste-and-environment/book-pest-control-appointment**

If you live in a rented property, please contact your landlord to arrange treatment. To report drainage defects contact United Utilities on 0345 672 3723.

Environmental cleanliness issues, such as fly tipping, overflowing bins or litter left outside takeaways, can also lead to rat infestations, so please report any local incidents to Knowsley Council online at **www.knowsley.gov.uk**

