



## **How to Prevent A Rodent Infestation**

1. Maintain your property in a sanitary manner.
  - Keep grills clean
  - Store woodpiles neatly with a 12-inch ground clearance
  - Remove dog and cat feces promptly
2. Rodent proof all accessory structures (ex. sheds) and garages using durable materials such as ¼ inch mesh, metal hardware, or sheet metal. Eliminate all gaps greater than ¼ inch.
3. Reduce or eliminate rodent accessible food, water, and harborage (potential shelter).
  - Do not leave pet food out at night
  - Remove birdfeeders that rodents can access
  - Remove water sources
  - Keep trash containers and/or dumpsters closed at all times, tightly sealed and emptied frequently
4. Thin vegetation and keep grass and shrubbery cut short.
5. Routinely inspect the property for evidence of rodents, including burrows, tracks, droppings, and chew marks.
6. If you live in rental housing and you see signs of rodents, tell your landlord.
7. Share this information with your neighbors. Rodent problems are a community issue. Working together will help eliminate this problem.

**If you discover rodent infestation on your property,  
contact a licensed pest control company for assistance.**

**To report a rodent sighting, use the following link:**

[www.newtonma.gov/rodentreport](http://www.newtonma.gov/rodentreport)

### **Questions?**

Newton Health & Human Services Department  
617-796-1420

[www.newtonma.gov/health](http://www.newtonma.gov/health)

## **Rodent Infestation Frequently Asked Questions**

### **What is the City doing?**

The Health & Human Services Department works with other City departments, residents and business owners to promote better understandings of rat behavior and how to minimize their presence and impact on the community. Our Environmental Health Specialists provide educational information to the public and businesses and construction sites to promote and ensure best practices in the area of pest management and control. The Public Buildings Department pretreats for rodents on city projects and monitors for rodent presence throughout projects, taking appropriate pest control steps as needed.

### **I have seen rats in my home or yard. Who should I call?**

If you notice any evidence of rodent activity on your property, contact a licensed pest control company to properly eradicate the issue. Pest control companies can be found in the local phone book or online.

### **How does the problem in our city compare to the problem in other communities?**

Rats are a natural part of the urban environment in Newton and the surrounding greater Boston area communities. Rats have been with us for a very long time and will thrive in places where they can find an abundance of food, water, and shelter. In general, where there are people, rats will often follow. We have heard from colleagues in many neighboring communities that they are experiencing a similar uptick in rat sightings this year. Newton is not unique in this trend.

### **What do you think is causing the increase in rat sightings?**

- The most **scientific explanation** and plausible cause is related to the shorter and warmer winters we have had in recent years. Rats are typically less active during the colder parts of the year and are less likely to breed. With a warmer winter, they can breed more and have more offspring that will eventually increase the size of the population we see during the summer and fall.
- Additional reasons for increased in rat sightings may include:
  - **Construction**- vibrations disrupting their below ground habitat
  - **Lack of natural predators** such as coyotes, foxes, and birds of prey, due to ever expanding development and decreasing green spaces.

### **Will the construction I see in my neighborhood increase rodent activity?**

Construction doesn't necessarily lead to an increase in rats. Increasing prevention strategies by working with pest control companies will help remediate rodent activity during extensive demolition or excavation projects.

### **Why do rats have such a bad reputation?**

Rats are actually quite intelligent and interesting creatures. However, they have been given a bad reputation throughout history for their spread of disease. Rats can potentially act as a vector for diseases such as E. coli, salmonella, hantavirus, and leptospirosis. Luckily, the odds of a human contracting these diseases from a rat is very low, as humans now do not have repeated, direct contact with rodents. The risk for disease from rats becomes even smaller if people take proper precautions to keep their properties rodent-harborage free. As always, people should use gloves when handling any material a rodent may have come in contact with, and should wash their hands promptly upon returning inside.