RATS

Rats pose a significant health risk; they can carry a range of serious diseases which can be transmitted to humans. The most serious of these are Weil’s disease, Plague, Salmonella food poisoning and Toxoplasmosis. Rats also infest and contaminate food with urine and droppings, and can also cause structural damage to buildings by gnawing through timbers, pipes, cables and other building fabrics.

There are two different species of rat in the British Isles:
The common or brown rat (Rattus norvegicus) is the most likely to be found. It lives in sewers, around water courses, wasteland and also in and around buildings. Fully grown a brown rat weighs on average approximately 350 grams and has a body length of about 20cm, with a 10 -12cm tail. Its fur is coarse and varies in colour from grey/brown to almost black, with a paler underside. To complete the picture, it has a blunt snout and small furry ears. The brown rat is an agile climber and may nest in roofs or the upper floors of buildings. It is mainly active at night but may be seen foraging for food and water during the day, particularly where there is a heavy infestation. brown rat droppings are spindle shaped.

The ship or black rat (Rattus rattus) is far less common and is usually only found around docks but can also infest warehouses and other buildings. It is considerably smaller than the brown rat and although rarely seen, is our native species of rat. In contrast to the brown rat, the black rat is smaller, reaching only 300 grams in weight and has black or dark brown fur with an almost white underside. Unlike the brown rat it has a thin tail that is longer than its 17-20 cm head and body, a pointed snout and large translucent ears. Much like the brown rat they are also agile climbers. Black rat droppings are banana or sausage shaped. It extremely unlikely that you will encounter a black rat in Redbridge nowadays.

All rats need a constant supply of food and water to survive and breed, along with shelter and a safe place to build a nest. Therefore the best means of control is to ensure that these are not available. Proper disposal of rubbish is essential to prevent rat infestation, as is proper storage of foodstuffs. For example, grain and seeds stored loosely in sheds are an ideal source of food for rats.

The legal position

The Prevention of Damage by Pests Act1949 places a duty on owners and occupiers of land to keep their land free of rats. The Council has powers to require land owners and occupiers to take such measures as are necessary to ensure their land is rat free. This may include specified eradication treatment, structural works or land clearance.

What you can do to prevent rat infestations

• Keep your property clean and tidy and cut back any overgrown areas of your land.
• Make sure your property is in good repair, your external doors are close fitting and that there are no broken air vents or other openings in external walls for rats to gain access.
• Do not allow household or business waste to accumulate outside your property.
• Do not leave bread, food waste or wild bird foods out overnight, as it will attract rats. Clear up any food you have left out for birds that is not used at the end of the day.
• Replace any broken manhole covers and where they are your responsibility, repair any damaged or open drains on your property.
• When carrying out any work to the drains that serve your property, or if you are adding a new structure to the existing building, make sure your builder has properly sealed any redundant drains and backfilled any unnecessary voids below ground which might provide harborage for rats.
• Report any rat sightings to the Council.

The Service provided by the Council

Rat treatments consist of laying poisoned baits in either secure containers, directly into drainage manholes or where they exist, rat nesting holes. During the treatment period baits are checked regularly and topped up as necessary. Rats will die over a period of days after eating the poison, however it may take 2 or 3 treatments to completely eradicate an infestation. Where a property is involved, the Pest control Officer in attendance will also give advice on rat proofing and other control measures for the premises in order to stop the problem recurring. However, the Council will not guarantee its treatment if the recommended work is not carried out in full. Any dead rats found following the Council’s treatment will be removed by the Pest Control Officer providing the carcass is readily accessible and its recovery does not give rise to any health and safety risks to the operator.

The Council charge for this service – please see web page for pest control charges or call 020 8708 5000.

Safety Information

The poison baits used by the Council are the safest available and do not pose a risk to people unless taken deliberately. Baits are only laid in areas where it is safe to do so and are never laid in places open to the general public, unless in a secure container. Should you use the service you will also be given an information sheet on the rodenticide used by the pest controller which provides further information.

Contacting the Service

Treatments can be requested by contacting the Pest Control Service on 020 8708 5000. You can also request a service by completing the online form.