

Rats are widespread throughout the metropolitan area and in our community. The most common species within this area are the Norway Rat (*Rattus Norvegicus*) and the Roof Rat (*Rattus Rattus*). It is almost impossible to completely eradicate them; however there are actions we can all take to reduce the problem. Here are some helpful hints to reduce the opportunities for rats to harbour in our community.

## Detecting Rats

The presence of rats may be detected by 'droppings', 'rat runs', 'eaten foods' or damage to food containers.

- Droppings are black, thin and about 10mm in length.
- Rat runs are formed because the rodents prefer to run alongside a wall or fence and over time, a distinct path is worn in the dust or grass. By following this rat run, the rat may be traced to shelter.
- Eaten food is usually placed in a protected area against the fence lines and could include eaten snail shells, almonds and fruit seeds.
- Look out for signs of fruit and vegetables that have been eaten.

## How to Remove Rats from Your Property

The most common methods for controlling rats are trapping and poisoning. Rat baits should be placed in areas where rodent activity has been noted. Care should be taken to ensure baits are placed so as to be inaccessible to children, pets and wildlife. Trapping and poisoning rats will kill rats on your premises, but this is only a temporary measure as rats will return if favourable conditions for existence persist. For complete extermination and protection against re-infestation, rats must be deprived of food and shelter.

## Eating Habits

Rats eat practically all food from fruit and vegetables to meat and garbage. They also eat excreta, thus becoming a carrier of dysentery, diarrhoea and gastroenteritis. Rats forage mostly at night, but if seen during daylight hours, the rat is very hungry possibly because of over population or because food is readily available.

## Breeding Habits

The average number of rats per litter is ten and under varying conditions, three to twelve litters may be produced by one female in a year. The young develop rapidly and at three or four months old commence to breed. Rats live for about four years, with a reproductive potential so great that almost 250,000 rats can be produced from one pair and their progeny in three years.

## How to Deny Rats Shelter

- Clear the house and land of all rubbish and timber, or stack it at least 300mm above the ground.
- Do not allow vegetation to get out of control, keep lawns short all year round, and remove garden refuse.
- Keep your garage neat and tidy.
- Quickly repair any damage to wall linings, cracks and crevices to overcome entry of vermin. Durable material such as cast iron grills, heavy gauge sheet metal and rich cement mortar or concrete mix.

## How to Deny Rats Food

- Place all food scraps in a container with a close fitting lid. If compost bins are used, keep the base of the bin clear of any vegetation and don't throw meat or dog faeces into the compost bin.
- Keep fowl yards clear of all waste products.
- Keep poultry and animal food in metal bins with tight fitting lids.
- Where there are fruit trees and nut trees, regularly clean up any fallen