

Rat Harborage - Prevention & Control Measures

The Norway Rat



The type of rat found in the Baltimore area is called the Norway rat, also known as the brown rat, house rat, sewer rat, wharf rat or barn rat.

Identification

- Body length – 7 to 10 inches
- Tail – 6 to 8 inches
- Weight – 7 to 18 ounces
- Fur – coarse and usually brown or dark grey with lighter fur on the belly.

Diseases

Typhus, Leptospirosis, Trichinosis, Salmonellosis, and Rat Bite Fever are among the diseases sometimes carried by rats that may be transmitted to humans.

Habitat

Lives in close association with people. Burrows to make nests under buildings, beneath concrete slabs, along stream banks, around ponds, in garbage dumps and other locations that provide adequate food, a water source and shelter. Seldom travels more than 150 feet from its nest.

Damage Prevention and Control Methods

1. Exclusion: Seal all openings larger than ½ inch, including doors, windows and foundations to keep rats out of your home.
2. Poisons: Carefully follow the directions on the manufacturers label or call a professional exterminator.
3. Traps: Carefully follow the directions on the manufacturers label or call a professional exterminator.

Changes Around Your Home/Property

Remove all sources of food, water and shelter. Use these tips to get started:

- Use metal garbage cans with tight-fitting lids to prevent rats from chewing through or climbing in your garbage cans.
- Move leftover pet food indoors after each feeding. Remove pet waste from your yard daily because this can serve as a food source.
- Keep bird feed off the ground – provide a catch tray, or cease feeding birds until rat infestation is abated.
- Mow tall weeds and grass.
- Stack lumber or building materials at least 18 inches above the ground. This deprives rats of a place to hide and you can look for signs of infestation more easily.
- Remove junked cars, abandoned appliances, furniture and other bulky items from property. These provide good homes for rats.
- Close holes in windows, doors, etc. with screens (1/4 inch mesh or less) or sheet metal. Close openings around pipes by using cement or sheet metal.
- Use only grass, flower cuttings and leaves in compost piles. Leave out food scraps and other trash.
- Stake or tie up as many plants as possible in vegetable gardens. When left to grow on the ground, bean, cucumber, tomato and other plants provide harborage for rats. Pick up fruit or vegetables that have fallen from the plant and dispose of them in trash containers. Garden rows should be kept free of grass and weeds.

Responsibility for Abatement:

A rat infestation is a violation of the Howard County Code, Section 12.110. Rat infestations must be abated for economic and health reasons. Rats may cause costly damage to property and may transmit diseases to humans. Section 12.110 states that a rat infestation is considered a nuisance and therefore must be abated. The responsibility for the abatement belongs to the person(s) who own or rent the property on which the infestation exists.

For further information contact the Bureau of Environmental Health at (410) 313-1773.