



# City of Westminster

## Pest Information

**FREE PHONE:  
0800 3580514**

### Rats



#### **What do they look like?**

The common rat found in Westminster is the Norway or brown rat, it has brownish fur on its back and grey underneath but its colour can vary from white through to black. Adult body length is 200 - 270mm plus a tail length of 150 - 200mm.

#### **Where do they live?**

Common rats live in any situation that provides food, water and shelter. The common rat is the most widespread of its species and is widely found in urban and rural areas. In homes they will live in loft spaces, wall cavities, cellars or under floorboards. In gardens, they will burrow into compost heaps and grassy banks or under sheds. They are also found living in sewer systems.

### What are the signs of infestation?

- sightings of live or dead rats
- common rat droppings can be 12mm long and taper at both ends
- runs – rats follow the same routes when travelling and leave trails through the grass and low vegetation
- footprints and tail swipes – on muddy or dusty surfaces
- smears – dark grey marks left on surfaces by repeated contact with rat fur
- burrows – entrance holes 7-120mm in diameter in grassy banks, under tree roots, at the end of paving or drain cover surrounds
- nests – sometime found indoors, in lofts or under floorboards
- gnawing – rats gnaw continually, even on non-food materials, in order to wear down their front teeth

### What do they eat?

Their favourite foods are cereal products, although they will eat almost anything that humans eat and some that humans don't – including each other. Most of the damage they do is by gnawing and ripping open packets. They also foul food with urine and droppings.

### Why must rats be controlled?

Rats can transmit many diseases to humans, including Salmonellosis (food poisoning) and Weil's disease. Rats will eat or contaminate food intended for humans. It is estimated that up to 5% of food produced world-wide is lost as a result of rodent activity. They can cause damage to buildings and other structures by gnawing and burrowing.

### How can I prevent an infestation?

Householders can assist in preventing infestation by some simple measures:

- remove potential nesting sites by keeping yards and gardens clean and tidy, and by cutting back overgrown areas
- Stored materials should ideally be at least 19 inches off the ground to make access harder and identification of infestation easier. Products should also be kept away from walls
- do not feed wild birds or other animals to excess – you may be feeding rats as well
- Keep your home in good repair so that rats cannot gain access to it. Ensure that the drain inspection covers are in place and are in good repair
- Do not leave household waste where rats can get at it. Food and food waste should be stored in sealed containers, including compost bins
- Having a good housekeeping system for any outdoor pets, e.g. rabbits in hutches or pigeons in lofts. Poor housekeeping can easily result in a rat infestation

### How can I get rid of rats?

Call City of Westminster Council Pest Control Team **Free Phone 0800 3580514**.

### Treatment

Fully trained and qualified council pest control officers will survey the premises including drainage where applicable; poison bait stations / traps will be placed in the most appropriate and safe locations. If the Rat is still in the property and can be captured it will be humanely destroyed. You will be issued a **Notice to Occupier** form detailing which poisons have been left in the property; keep this in a safe place for reference for emergency services should the need arise. You may also be given advice on house-keeping which may assist the treatment. Minor proofing may be carried out by the officer; if substantial works are required a **Proofing Advice** form will be emailed to your estate office. This is usually done on the final treatment to aid prevention of a re-infestation. Any follow up appointments will be arranged with you at the end of each visit.

### Post Treatment

Should a rat be sighted inside the property again please call us and we will attend. We use safer poisons which require multiple feeds before they will kill the rat (typically this can take up to 10 days) and means rat sightings / activity may occur for a short period after each treatment. Depending on the circumstances most rat infestations take between four to eight weeks to control. Should you find a dead rodent on your premises please call us for collection and disposal.

**Failing to report** a rat infestation is not wise; rats do not disappear of their own accord. If you believe you have a rat infestation in your property, please contact City of Westminster Council Pest Control Team.