

**PUBLIC PROTECTION – ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH SERVICE**

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**Pest advice - Rats****What do they look like?**

The common rat typically has brownish fur on its back and is grey underneath, but 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. 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 commonly found living in sewer systems.

**What are the signs of infestation?**

- Sightings of live 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 edge of paving or drain cover surrounds.
- Nests – sometimes 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. 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 food poisoning and Weils disease.

- Rats will eat or contaminate food intended for humans. It is estimated that up to 5 per cent of food produced world-wide is lost as a result of rodent activity.
- Damage to buildings and other structures due to rat gnawing and burrowing.

**Householders can assist in preventing infestation by some simple measures:**

1. Remove potential nesting sites by keeping yards and gardens clean and tidy, and by cutting back overgrown areas.
2. Do not feed wild birds or other animals to excess as you may be feeding rats as well.
3. 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.
4. Do not leave household waste where rats can get at it.

**How can I get rid of rats?**

Rats are adaptable, highly mobile and breed rapidly. This combination makes rat control a difficult task for the untrained individual.

**Professional treatment**

Powys County Council does not undertake treatment for rats. Commercial pest control companies are listed on the internet, in the Yellow Pages and Thompson's Local Directory.