



PUBLIC HEALTH NOTICE

The Health Department has received calls about rat sightings. When food, water, and shelter are available, rat populations can reproduce and grow quickly. Eliminating food sources and removing harborage is an essential strategy toward mitigating this problem. The following information will provide simple and effective ways to keep rats out of your yard and home. Here are some tips we've gathered on discouraging rodents:

- Garbage is an excellent food source for rodents. Store garbage and rubbish in rodent proof containers. Receptacles should be rust resistant, water tight, and have tight fitting lids.
- Rodents also feed on bird seed, snails, garden vegetables, compost, and dog food. Do not leave pet food out overnight. Remove bird feeders and compost. Do not put any food out for stray cats, turkeys, foxes, or squirrels. Do not store produce or other foods outdoors.
- Rats communicate and attract each other through their urine and droppings. Sweep up droppings and clean up dark greasy track marks. Wash down the areas with a mild bleach solution (one part bleach, ten parts water).
- Clutter gives rats lots of places to hide, sleep, nest, and reproduce. Remove and recycle piles of newspapers, paper bags, cardboard, and bottles. Clear out your yard and basement, remove junk, and unnecessary debris from these areas. Store items away from walls and off the ground.
- Stack firewood 18 inches off the ground and away from buildings.
- Rats are often found in burrows under bushes and plants. Keep tall grass, bushes, shrubs, and mulch away from building foundations. Pull out ivy around burrows. Make space between plants and avoid dense planting. Keep gardens free of weeds and trash.
- Rats can enter your dwelling from branches that overhang the roof. Trim tree limbs at least four feet (4') away from roofs, attic vents, eaves, and utility wires.
- Rats chew holes into buildings, and can squeeze through cracks and holes as small as a half inch. To keep rats out for good, seal all holes and cracks in foundations, walls, floors, underneath doors, and around windows, including on sheds and other out-buildings.
- Rats can be controlled by trapping and baiting. **Be sure to use products that are specifically for rats.**
- Snap and glue traps are most effective when placed in rodent runways between harborages and feeding areas. When trapping, it is best to place the traps unset but baited for several days to allow the rats to become accustomed to the traps. Set the traps only after the bait has been taken.
- The Animal Welfare Committee recommends the "Goodnature A24 Rodent Trap" manufactured by Automatic Trap Company, as the most humane and effective device available as part of their recommendations to reduce rat populations, as an immediate measure. The Committee is researching alternatives to bring forward recommendations for long term solutions to eliminating rodents.
- **If you must use poison baits read and follow all label instructions before use.** Use tamper-resistant bait stations that are properly secured so they cannot be carried away or moved. Place them out of reach of children and non-target animals. Bait stations should not be placed out in the open, but hidden behind shrubbery or other objects where evidence of rodent activity has been observed. Poison may harm non-target animals.

- **Disposable gloves should be worn when handling bait and dead rats.**
- Dead rats should be placed in two bags and placed in the trash.

Pest control companies can also be effective. A good company will inspect your property before giving you a price quote, give you a written inspection report and an action plan, and base their price quotes on inspection findings, not flat fees. They may also make referrals for structural repairs. Ask about non-poison options. Most importantly, they will visit you often and work with you until the rats are gone. Rat treatment takes more than one visit.

On September 19th at 6 p.m. at the Provincetown Public Library, the Board of Health will be hosting a talk by Gary Menin, a member of the Sterling, MA Board of Health and a knowledgeable advocate on environmentally responsible rodent management. The problem with many commonly used rat management tactics, like poison, is harm to the other animals that help control pests. For that reason, we have elected this educational approach as the first line of defense, in lieu of site-specific enforcement notices.

Please talk with your neighbors and work together as we know rats are a community problem, and the rodents can move easily from one place to another. Please do not hesitate to call the Health Department if you would like to discuss this matter further.