

Rats and mice have lived in association with man for thousands of years. Our homes and food supplies are attractive to them. However, these rodents are unwelcome guests as they cause damage, spoil food and spread disease.

## Mice

The common house mouse (*Mus musculus*) is a slender creature growing up to a maximum of 25g with a pear shaped body 90mm long and a tail also 90mm. The fur is brown-grey on the back and paler on the body. The tail is dark in colour all over. It has large ears in comparison to its body.



Mouse

The mouse can climb very well and squeeze through holes just 6 mm across, so it can easily enter most homes. The first sign is often the small black droppings, similar in size to a rice grain, which it produces at the rate of about 80 a day. The other main sign of their presence is damage to foods and other objects. Like all rodents, the teeth of the mouse are constantly growing and they will often exercise them by gnawing on timber, wiring, pipe work, etc.

Mice tend to eat and sleep in a rather small area, perhaps staying in one house for all their needs or travelling up to 100m in fields. Nearly all of the activity will be at night.

Mice have a 3 week pregnancy, a 3 week weaning period and become sexually mature 5-9 weeks later. Under ideal conditions a new litter of around 5 young can be produced every 4 weeks. Mice can live for over 2 years as pets, though are unlikely to live more than 6-12 months in the wild.

Mice eat up to 20% of their body weight in food each day and only require drinking water if their foods are dry. They will eat almost anything that man eats. They also tend to eat just a small amount of food from lots of different sources – leading to spoilage of far more food than they actually consume.

## Rats

The most common rat found in the UK is the brown or sewer rat. Rats are capable of spreading disease including Leptospirosis, Salmonella food poisoning, Typhus, Trichinosis and tapeworms.

The brown rat (*Rattus norvegicus*) is a thick-set creature growing up to a maximum of 550g with a body 220mm long and a tail of 170mm. The fur is a brown-grey on the back and paler on the belly. The tail is dark in colour above and lighter below.



Rat

The rat produces small dark brown droppings, about 20mm long. The other main sign of their presence is damage to foods and other objects. Like the mouse, they will often exercise their teeth by gnawing on timber, wiring, pipe work etc. Soft metals such as lead and aluminium are no barrier to an active rat.

The rat spends most of its time within 50m of its home but can range 300m or so. It also often changes harbourage every week or two and may travel several kilometres on those occasions.

Many rats have their homes in sewers that provide a surprising supply of foods. They will emerge through openings or breaks in the drains to search for yet more food and doubtless spread many disease organisms in the process. Nearly all of its activity will be at night, but they will be seen in the day.

The breeding cycle is similar to that for the mouse.

Rats eat up to 10% of their body weight in food each day and also require a supply of drinking water. They will eat almost anything that man eats.

### **Treatment**

If you see signs of rats or mice anywhere in the house or garden, please report it to the Council as soon as possible. Harrow Council Pest Control offers an affordable, chargeable service for domestic premises for rats and mice. Please visit our website or telephone us for further information on pricing.

To treat the infestation we use poisoned baits, which are placed in areas that pets or children cannot reach or in purpose made bait boxes. Follow-up visits to monitor the take up of the bait are made and further baits laid as necessary until the infestation is eradicated.

### **Preventing infestations**

Clear up any spillages of food thoroughly. Take care that all waste foods are disposed of into your black food caddy and not left lying around indoors or in sacks. If you are composting, then do not use meat products or cooked waste, as these are particularly attractive to rats.

Bird food can easily support a family of vermin and will encourage rats onto your property. If you wish to feed birds, then please use rat proof bird tables or hanging feeders and if you have an infestation, then do not place bird feed in the garden at all.

Seal up any gaps around pipes going through the wall, repair broken airbricks and ensure doors e.g. garage doors are well fitting.

### **Repairs**

Always repair defects to drains quickly and never leave manholes uncovered for long periods.

### **Dead rodents**

If you discover a dead rodent, pick it up with a spade and bury it in the garden rather than putting it in the bin. Alternatively Harrow Council can provide a disposal service for a small fee. Do not handle the dead rodent directly as there is a danger of infection from the parasites or other disease organisms. Always remember to wash your hands after you have finished.

**Advice on the identification and control of all household pests is provided free of charge and is available by phone, email or via our website.**

Harrow Council  
Community Directorate  
P O Box 18, Civic Centre  
Harrow, Middlesex, HA1 2UT

☎ 020 8424 7666  
Fax: 0845 280 1845

E-mail: [pest.control@harrow.gov.uk](mailto:pest.control@harrow.gov.uk)  
Web site: [www.harrowcommercialservices.co.uk](http://www.harrowcommercialservices.co.uk)  
[www.harrow.gov.uk](http://www.harrow.gov.uk)