

## Rat Information

Rats and mice take advantage of human food, shelter and co-exist with people. Rats contaminate food, spread diseases and cause damage to property. In order to control and prevent rat infestations in Arlington we implement a strategy that includes elimination of food and harborage, inspection and application of rodenticides at public properties, community education and public outreach.

### The Norway Rat (*Rattus norvegicus*)

The Norway rat is light brown to almost black in color. Its droppings are capsule-shaped, about three-quarter of an inch long. It lives about one year; it births 6-12 "pups" per litter, and can produce up to 7 litters per year.



Norway rats burrow in the ground, under buildings and rubbish; usually living well within 150 feet of a food and water source. Rats require about one ounce of food a day and a half ounce of water. They feed on familiar food, preferring meats and grains, and are cautious of new items or new food. It is important to know that rats love dog feces.

## What are the signs of rat infestation?

Rats are generally most active at night. They leave telltale signs including:

**Burrow(s):** Hole(s) in the ground



**Gnawing:** Bite or nibble



**Droppings:** Fecal matter



**Tracks:** A mark or succession of marks left by rats



**Smears:** Sticky, greasy, or dirty substance on surfaces

## HOW TO CONTROL RATS

### How can I get rid of rats?

Rats, like people, need a place to live and food to eat. If you eliminate their shelter and food, rat populations can be controlled.

### Eliminate food sources:

- Eliminate water sources
- Place bird food in a feeder, not on the ground and clean up spillage daily
- Use approved trash cans with tight-fitting lids and keep trash cans covered
- Clean up fallen fruits, berries and nuts from the ground
- Avoid leaving food out for pets
- Clean up animal waste frequently

### Remove shelter:

- A dilapidated shed or automobile is an invitation to rats. Repair or remove them
- Seal any openings to the house, even above ground level
- Keep doors and windows screened
- Store lumber, firewood or other materials off the ground

### Rat bait station



### Trap them:

- Glue traps or glue boards are preferred for indoors use
- An alternative to glue traps is spring-loaded traps. They are effective indoors where poisons may pose a threat to people or pets
- Traps may be baited with peanut butter or with partially cooked bacon
- Mice may be trapped by binding nesting materials to spring-loaded traps
- Follow the directions on the trap package for proper placement and use

Mice & rat traps



### Poison them:

An effective rat poisoning program requires a fresh, dry supply of bait that is readily available. To kill rats in the shortest time possible, first eliminate all other sources of food, forcing the rats to accept the poison as their only food.

### Poison Rat Baits:

- Use any properly labeled, EPA approved poison rat bait. These may be bought from your local hardware or garden shop
- For safety and maximum effectiveness, be sure to follow label directions carefully and wear gloves when using any poison
- Always be careful to place rat bait/traps out of the reach of children and pets!

## Where do rats live?

- Near food sources, in and around garbage cans, and trash piles
- Under overgrown bushes, vines, tall grasses and rocks
- Around pet food dishes, bird feeders and vegetable gardens
- In abandoned cars, appliances and furniture
- Under storage sheds
- Under air conditioning units
- Under firewood



## Rodent Control Safety Tips

- Never touch rats, objects they have contaminated, or rat poison.
- Always wear disposable gloves when handling rats, rat bait or when cleaning rat soiled areas.
- Avoid stirring up and breathing dust in these areas.
- Wear a mask to avoid breathing dust particles contaminated by rats.
- To eliminate dust, use a disinfectant to dampen soiled nesting material and droppings before sweeping.
- Wash your hands afterwards.

## Some diseases transmitted by rodents

- Rat bite fever (*Bacillus moniliformis*)
- Salmonellosis (*S. typhimurium*)
- Hantavirus Pulmonary Syndrome
- Plague (especially bubonic)
- Leptospirosis
- Fungus causing ringworm

## Useful Links

- Center for Disease Control & Prevention (CDC)  
[www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov)
- Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)  
[www.epa.gov](http://www.epa.gov)
- Virginia Department of Health (VDH)  
[www.vdh.state.va.us](http://www.vdh.state.va.us)



For additional information or to request assistance, please visit:

<http://www.co.arlington.va.us/Departments/HumanServices/services/health/envhealth/HumanServicesRatControl.aspx>

or contact:

**Vector Control Office**  
Environmental Health Bureau  
Public Health Division  
800 S. Walter Reed Dr.  
Arlington, VA 22204

Tel. (703)-228-7RATS or (703)-228-7728

Fax (703)-228-7401  
[ehealth@arlingtonva.us](mailto:ehealth@arlingtonva.us)

**Seal Up! Trap Up! Clean Up!**

# Together We Can Control Rats

**Eliminate Food & Harborage**



**Vector Control Office**  
**Public Health Division**  
**Arlington County, VA**