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RAT FACTS

Habitat

The Norway rat is not a native species to Canada or North America. Rats were originally introduced by early explorers and due to their adaptability and fertility were able to invade the entire continent. They now persist as urban and rural pests and can find shelter in, on or under almost any structure. Rats will burrow under structures, trees, shrubs, sheds, debris piles, stationary machinery, automobiles, and just about anywhere that provides protection from threats and the elements.
Contrary to popular belief, rats are very clean and social animals. They prefer quiet dark places within 30 – 100 feet from their food source. They are creatures of habit and will use the same runways daily and follow a daily routine. Displacement of rats usually occurs when their habitat is compromised. Habitats can be compromised in a number of ways; Natural Disaster (flood, fire etc), Mechanical (Debris cleanup, demolition, development), Growth (Overpopulation, food competition).

Breeding

Litter size: Range between 6 and 12 pups, 4-6 times per year per female rat.
Frequency: Rats are born 3 weeks after conception. The female will be ready to mate within 48 hrs after birth and will be every 4-5 days until next pregnancy.
Sexual maturity: 3 months of age

These breeding characteristics are the main reason why rats are so persistent.

Feeding

Frequency: Daily. Rats are in constant search of new fresh food sources and are known to store large quantities of food.
Time of day: Night time is when rats are most active, but can adapt if daytime travels better suit their needs.
Diet: Rats will feed on an array of sources. They prefer fresh fruits, meats, eggs and other high quality foods.

Morphology and Lifestyle

Body length: 6 - 10 in
Tail length: 6 - 10 in When folded over its body the tail will reach between its ears. Mice tails will reach only to the base of its neck.
Weight: Up to 1lb
Lifespan: Typically 12 months but can range to 18 months and even 2 years in ideal conditions.

Did You Know?

Rat fact: A hole the size of a Loonie is ample space for a rat to access your home.
Rat fact: Rats mark their runways by urinating as they run.
Rat fact: Rats will not travel more than 100 feet from their habitat in search of food
Rat fact: Rats are shy and timid and nature and do not like new items introduced in their environment. This can make trapping difficult
Rat fact: Rats can jump about 2 – 3 feet vertically and up to 4 feet horizontally.
Rat fact: Rats can free fall from above 50 feet without serious injury.

Prevention

Environmental Surroundings:

Exterior of home and surrounding property should be kept free of debris piles, both organic and in-organic. Shrubs, bushes and landscaping should be kept up and trimmed to a height of above 6 inches above the ground and away from any structure. Stationary machinery, farm equipment and automobiles should be inspected and rotated around property to prevent it from harboring rodent activity, on a quarterly basis. Equipment no longer in use or damaged beyond repair should be removed from property for proper disposal.

Sanitation Issues:

Garbage, recyclables and composts should all be kept in proper receptacles in a fashion which allows lids to properly close and seal, Additional bins should be added if family waste levels are high to prevent spilling and overflowing bins. It is important to keep the interior of home free of heavy clutter, dirty dishes and cooking areas and garbage collection.

Structural Maintenance:

Proper maintenance to the exterior of the structure is important in prevention. A rat can fit through a hole ¼ inch across and can create an entry through a weak point even smaller. Vents should be sealed with proper covers or wire mesh. Any gap should be repaired with a permanent material to prevent rodent entry. Expanding foam can be used in prevention, in times of active infestation, stronger materials, like wire mesh, wood or cement will be required. Roofs and undersides of decks and porches should be inspected as well, as these often provide quiet areas for rodents to gain access through weak points in the structure.

Proper prevention and maintenance programs will reduce the pressure to the structure and minimize risk of infestation in your structure and property.

Control

Mechanical:

Mechanical trapping is the most effective method for control of interior infestation. Trapping allows for assurance that rat has been killed, verification of population size and prevent decay in wall voids and subfloors. Traps must be placed in runways, against wall and require several traps in each location in order to trap adult rats. Trapping may take several days to begin if colonies and runways are well established. Juvenile rats are usually first trapped followed by breeding females and last the Alpha Male. Mechanical trapping will prove to be unsuccessful if full exclusion of structure is not performed.

Chemical:

Rodenticides can be a good solution for exterior control and elimination but is not recommended for interior of any building when dealing with rats. Rodenticides can be purchased at most hardware stores. While readily available, rodenticides are poisons designed to kill ALL mammals, including children and pets. Poisons should NEVER be used against label restrictions or kept in reach of children and pets. When using poison outdoors, it should be placed in proper bait stations, designed to protect against non-target pests from contacting poison. Poisons can also be used in burrow baiting, where the bait is placed directly into the rodent burrow and then covered over with soil or other to prevent exposure to non-targets. Poisons should NEVER be placed aimlessly throughout property; strategic placements will assure safety, increase effectiveness and prevent mis-use and over application.