



**COMMON BROWN RAT**  
(*Rattus norvegicus*),  
**BLACK RAT**  
(*Rattus rattus*)



**APPEARANCE**

Britain is host to two species of rat, *Rattus Norvegicus* (the Brown or sewer rat) and *Rattus Rattus* (the Black or ship rat).

The Brown Rat weighs 100 - 500 grams its upperparts are dark brown becoming lighter brown to grey or even white on the underparts. The tail is shorter than the head and body and the head and face are quite blunt in appearance.

The Black rat is far less common and restricted to only 3 major ports. Its appearance is sleeker with a body weight between 100 - 300 grams with brown to black fur, large almost hairless ears and a tail which is longer than its head and body. This enables it to be very agile and an excellent climber which gives rise to its other name - "Roof Rat".

**LIFE CYCLE**

The life expectancy of a wild rat is approximately 12 - 18 months in which time the female will typically breed between 5 and 7 times, with an average litter size of between 7 and 8 young. Breeding can occur throughout the year depending more on the availability of food and harbourage than on weather conditions.

Both species are most active at night but may be seen in search of food and water during daylight hours.

**FEEDING HABITS**

Immense damage can be caused by rats feeding in warehouses and grain stores due to both quantities consumed, and contamination by faeces and urine. In domestic properties contamination and possible introduction of micro organisms which can cause food poisoning make this rodent a major public health pest.

## **SIGNS OF INFESTATION**

Many signs of infestation may occur, droppings being the first possible sign followed by gnawing. Damage to fabrics, excavations around or under buildings, well worn runs through undergrowth or smear marks (a dark mark caused by body grease) over surfaces which are crossed regularly are other tell tale signs. Where infestations occur near water courses holes will often be present in the banks as this offers an excellent escape route as rats are accomplished swimmers.

## **CONTROL**

Charnwood Borough Council offer a comprehensive Pest Control service for the control of rats. Our Pest Control Officers are fully trained officers using the latest technology and rodenticides to ensure full compliance with all statutory regulations while ensuring the least possible risk to non target species and the environment.

This service is free of charge for domestic premises.

Rats carry many diseases one of which is Weil's Disease which can cause serious illness. Rats need to be controlled and should be reported to the Environmental Health Division.

If you would like an explanation of this fact sheet in your language or to obtain copies in Braille, on audio tape or large print please contact 01509 634560.

For further information contact:

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