

## HUMAN-RAT CONFLICTS

Rats are not native to BC and tend to thrive only in urban areas or areas where food is abundant and winters are mild. Rats can cause significant damage to gardens, buildings, crops and livestock in their search for food and denning sites. Rats cause damage both from feeding on crops but also from gnawing through structures, including electrical wires.

Rat populations are spreading throughout the southern interior of BC. Getting ahead of the spread is key to being able to minimize the problems associated with large rat populations.

**It is in a home owner's best interest to keep a rat population from establishing itself in the first place; prevention is easier than eradication. Controlling food sources and limiting denning areas are key to keeping rats in check.**

Rats are exceptional breeders and a pair of rats could theoretically produce over 900 offspring within a single year!



The BC Conservation Foundation is a not-for-profit, registered charity that has been working in BC since 1969.

[www.bccf.com](http://www.bccf.com)



To report wildlife in conflict contact the Conservation Officer Service at

1.877.952.7277

**WildSafeBC is funded through the Province of British Columbia and in partnership with communities and organizations throughout BC.**



British Columbia Conservation Foundation

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# RATS



British Columbia Conservation Foundation





## MANAGE YOUR ATTRACTANTS

Rats are attracted to a wide variety of foods, and although they are good climbers and can get into relatively small spaces they can still be dissuaded from visiting your property.

- 1. Keep all garbage securely stored** until the day of collection. Garbage should be stored in a secure container which should be cleaned on a regular basis.
- 2. Feed pets indoors**, or if fed outdoors, bring in any feed that is not immediately eaten by your pets. Rats will quickly target any type of pet food left out.
- 3. Take birdfeeders down at night and feed only during winter months.** Birdfeeders attract a wide variety of wildlife and rats can climb along wires, ropes or steel posts. Be sure to clean up ALL spilled seed under the bird feeder. As rats are nocturnal, taking the feeder in at night will minimize the potential for rats accessing the feed.
- 4. Manage your compost properly and turn regularly.** Ideally you will use a rat-proof composter, but lacking that, turn your compost on a regular basis - right to the bottom to ensure that rats cannot nest underneath the compost. Line the bottom of your compost with wire mesh to exclude rats.
- 5. Engage with your neighbours.** If you have rats on your property, there is a good chance your neighbour does as well. Rat issues need to be addressed on a block-wide basis.

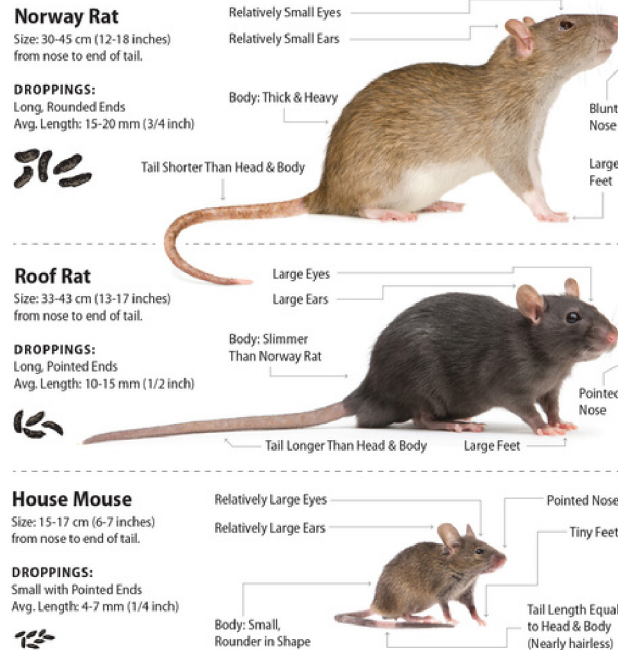
### ! RAT SAFETY

Rats should never be handled directly as they have very sharp teeth and a bite or scratch from a rat needs to be checked out immediately by a professional. Rats can carry a wide variety of diseases that can be transmitted to humans either through direct contact (bites or scratches) or via indirect means such as contamination by urine or feces.

When disposing of a dead rat or cleaning up after a rat infestation, be sure to wear appropriate protective equipment, such as rubber gloves and a mask. Consult the BC Centre for Disease Control for proper protocols.

Rats are not a species that the Conservation Officer Service deals with. Contact a local, reputable pest control agent if you need assistance with removing rats.

## Rat and Mouse: Comparison



Rats are considered a species of great concern for many home owners in B.C. Rat populations, once established, can increase exponentially in a very short period of time. In the past number of years, rat populations in urban areas in the southern half of the province have been on the increase.

**Norway and black rats are now well established in B.C.'s Lower Mainland and coastal islands. More recently they have become established throughout the Okanagan Valley (Vernon, Kelowna, Penticton, Osoyoos), Kamloops, the Shuswap area, Revelstoke and the Kootenay region (Nelson, Castlegar, New Denver, Creston).**

The negative effect of rats on native wildlife (most notably ground-nesting birds), has resulted in eradication programs on islands where rats have established themselves.

Rats are very adaptable when it comes to choosing a food supply and learn from their neighbours' specific foraging techniques. Some rats can even fish and dive for food like mussels and fingerlings.

### ! WHERE'S THE RAT?

If you'd like to document your sighting and contribute to distribution information for rats, please submit a report to [iNaturalist](#).

If you spot a rat outside its current known distribution, please report it to Province through the **Invasive Species Reporting App**.



### RAT FACTS:

- Rats (members of the genus *Rattus*) were introduced to BC via boat traffic in the mid-1800s.
- There are two types of rats in BC: The Norway rat (*Rattus norvegicus*) and the roof rat (*Rattus rattus*).
- Rats can grow up to 50 cm in length with about half of that being a tail that is devoid of hair.
- The Norway rat has a larger body than the roof rat, but conversely the roof rat's tail is longer than the Norway rat's tail (relative to the body size).
- Owls, hawks, foxes, coyotes and weasels prey upon rats; snakes eat immature rats.
- Rats are usually associated with urban environments but also survive along the coast where winters are not as severe.
- Rats are short lived and usually only survive a little over a year outside of captivity.
- Rats are omnivores (meaning they eat both meat and plant materials), but focus primarily on vegetation, including grains, fruits and vegetables. Rats will have a nest or den from which they will leave to go on. Normally, rats will forage within 100 m of their den but can travel longer distances if food is scarce.



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