

## ABOUT RATS

Rats have very accomplished climbing skills and can scale walls, pipes, cables, and trees. They can jump approximately 1.0 meter vertically, 1.2 meters horizontally and can fall 15 meters without hurting themselves. Rats are extremely good swimmers and they can wriggle through a hole one-quarter of its size.

The **Norway Rat**, also called the brown rat, and the **Roof Rat**, also known as the black rat, are the most common nuisance rats found around the Gander area.

These rodents eat and contaminate food, damage buildings, and other property by their gnawing and burrowing, and may spread disease that affect people and pets. Some of the rodent contaminations are tapeworm, salmonella food poisoning and various other fevers. These contaminations can be transmitted by:

- Food or utensils contamination with urine or droppings.
- Contamination by direct contact with urine or droppings, where bacteria can enter the skin through small scratches.
- Indirect contamination through blood sucking insects like fleas and mosquitoes.
- Contamination by directly biting humans.

For further information and advice,  
please contact:

**Town of Gander**

[harnold@gandercanada.com](mailto:harnold@gandercanada.com)

709-651-5915

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



Figure 1: Norway Rat (Brown Rat)



Figure 2: Roof Rat (Black Rat)



**RAT PREVENTION  
AND CONTROL**

**Town of Gander**

Rats are nocturnal, with their peak activity at dusk or before dawn. Rats will live in the ground where there is available space and are also known to live entirely inside buildings. Rats seek food outside, but many times will come inside at night to forage for food and return to their burrows. Rats prefer foods with a high protein or carbohydrate content but will eat almost any type of food. They also need water to survive. They can obtain this from toilets, sinks, rain puddles, condensation from utility pipes and fountains.

## HOW THE PRESENCE OF RATS CAN BE DETECTED

- Rat droppings – thin, black and 1 cm in length
- Gnawing – rats gnaw to control the growth of their teeth.
- Teeth marks in eaten food, especially fruits, vegetables and packet food.
- Rat runs – rats have poor vision and oily coats. Overtime, marks along walls or fences are formed and a path becomes worn.
- Burrow holes around buildings.
- Squeaking, gnawing or movement noises in walls, cupboards and ceilings and under floors.

## HOW TO DISCOURAGE RATS FROM YOUR PROPERTY

Rats can be discouraged from your property by denying them food and shelter. Ways to deny rats food and shelter include:

- Keep property clean and tidy. Remove materials that may provide shelter such as tin, overgrown vegetation, general litter, and any unwanted items. Do not allow waste to build up over time.
- Stack firewood at least 30 cm above the ground. Do not store on the ground or against sheds and fences.
- Waste storage areas should always be kept clean and any food spills should be wiped up immediately.
- Rubbish bins and compost containers should be well maintained and free from holes.
- Ensure gardens are well maintained. Keep grass short and regularly remove or limit garden waste. Regularly pick up any pet feces.
- Prune branches away from buildings to prevent access to the roof. Seal up holes in brick work or roofing materials using hard filler or alternatively use metal materials such as wire mesh or steel wool.

## HOW TO GET RID OF RATS

Rats can be suspicious of changes in the environment or new food, for this reason it may take a couple of days for traps or poison baits to take.

Tamper-proof bait stations that hold the baits in places and keep children and pets out are ideal in residential areas. Rat baits are available at local hardware stores.

Some natural repellents would be to use peppermint oil, castor oil, or citronella oil. Spread a little oil near where the rats are staying or their runs. Dried Used Cat litter near rat prone areas can also work.

There is a small list of human foods that are toxic to rats. This includes blue cheese (also dangerous to pets), licorice, poppy seeds and bitter almonds.

Owls are natural predators for rats, and rats keep their distance where owls hang out. If you place owl's feathers near their nests or holes, they'll move on.

Trapping and poisoning will kill rats. However, it is only a temporary measure. Rats will return if conditions are favorable to their needs.

## **Rodent Control – Rats**

Whether you own property or rent, or work in the Town of Gander, everyone has a role in rat prevention. Rat proofing your home and property is the most important factor to prevent and control these pests.

Rats are pests that are found year-round. They live outdoors and then migrate inside when cool weather approaches. They are found around buildings, in gardens and near garbage or compost bins. They are nocturnal animals, meaning that they are most active at night. If food and water are scarce, or if there is a large infestation, rats will be more active during the day.

Rats nest in any safe location where there are food and water sources available. This could be under wood piles, in abandoned vehicles, between walls or under floors of garages and sheds. Outdoors, they will burrow into the ground near their food source.

Rats are mature three months after birth and have a gestation period of 22 days. Four litters are common per year and each litter will generally contain eight to twelve young. The average lifespan of a rat is one year.

### **What residents and business can do to ensure rodent and pest control on private property:**

- Store garbage in rodent-proof containers with tight-fitting lids.
- Ensure yards are clear of junk and debris. Reduce clutter to prevent hiding spots.
- Eliminate all sources of food (pet feces, fallen fruit, rotten vegetables, leftover pet food, grass seed, bird seed, etc.).
- Store pet, wildlife food and lawn seed in an area not accessible to rats or in rodent proof containers.
- Compost properly – do not add fish or meat to backyard compost bins.
- Secure composters to prevent rodents from entering.
- Fix any leaky taps or drains, and eliminate any water accumulating in your yard.
- Cut tall grass around the house.
- Avoid the use of bird feeder and bird baths. If you use them ensure they are kept clean.
- Seek pest control services in the event of a rat infestation.

The most successful and permanent form of rat control is to make it impossible for rats to gain entrance into any structure where they are not wanted. If rats can be denied access to hiding places and food, they cannot survive.

### **Ways to rid your property of Rats**

Pest control on private property is the responsibility of the homeowner.

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Owls are natural predators for rats, and rats keep their distance from where owls hang out. If you place owl's feathers near their nests or holes, they'll move on.

Trapping and poisoning will kill rats. However, it is only a temporary measure. Rats will return to the property if the conditions are favorable to their needs.