



# COMHAIRLE NAN EILEAN SIAR

## PEST CONTROL ADVICE - RATS

Brown rats (also known as common or sewer rats) are the most common rat in Britain. They are mainly found in close contact with humans.

Control of the rat is very important as they can carry a wide range of diseases and parasites which are potentially harmful to humans and other animals. Diseases such as Leptospirosis and Weil's disease can be fatal in humans, and toxoplasmosis and salmonella may affect both humans and animals.

As well as spreading disease, rats can do a great deal of damage to the structures of buildings because they have to gnaw and so can cause serious damage to the fabric of buildings and increase the risk of electrical faults, fire and structural collapse.

### WHERE ARE BROWN RATS FOUND?

During the autumn and winter months, rats seek shelter and food in barns, sheds and garages. Even in the summer months, if there is a ready supply of food, rats will take up permanent residence in buildings, rather than returning to the open countryside to feed on vegetation.

Rats are also often found near the shoreline, in earth banks, compost heaps, sewers and the structure of buildings. They may also be found in undisturbed storage areas, such as haystacks and heaps of tyres or pallets, and in piles of undisturbed rubbish if the sites are close to a ready supply of food.

### HOW TO TELL IF YOU HAVE RATS

- regular sightings, in the house, garden, shed or garage;
- ammonia-like smell, strong in enclosed areas
- droppings usually grouped together,
- droppings that look like black baked beans, jelly beans or raisins 1 – 2 cm in length
- grease smears, burrows and gnawed holes.
- damage to the structure of the building, including wiring.
- scratching noises in the walls, under floors or decking.

### WHAT DO THEY EAT?

Brown Rats will eat virtually any kinds of food, but generally prefer cereals and grains. They will also eat meat, including carrion and other animals. On average, they need to eat 10% of their body weight every day. They also need water to drink and can only live for a few days without it.

### WHAT TO DO IF YOU HAVE RATS?

- Deal with them promptly, the faster you deal with them the less chance they will have to establish themselves and start to breed.
- Get help from a professional pest control service. The first step to dealing with any infestation is to identify the source and control the environmental conditions that favour rats in the first place. Rats need food, shelter and water: removing any one of these needs will get rid of the infestation.
- Maintain good standards of cleanliness and rubbish disposal:
  - remove accumulations of rubbish including pet faeces
  - keep food in rodent proof containers and dispose of spilled foods immediately.
  - keep the outside of the building clear of vegetation so as to expose any rat runs and burrows.
- Keep the building in good repair and proof it against rodent entry by blocking up holes in walls, floors and doors.
- Deal with any drainage defects promptly. Holes in pipes can give rats access to the roof space of your home.
- Do not put bird food onto the ground. Use spill proof bird feeders and clear up any spillages as they occur.

The Comhairle does not provide a pest control service, however, you can contact us for advice at:

Consumer & Environmental Services  
Development Department, Comhairle Na Eilean Siar,  
Sandwick Road, Stornoway, Isle of Lewis, HS1 2BW

**Tel:** 01851 822 694  
**Email:** [eh@cne-siar.gov.uk](mailto:eh@cne-siar.gov.uk)  
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