

TOWN OF SUTTON BOARD OF HEALTH

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SUTTON, MA 01590

RODENT CONTROL

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Rats have become an increasing problem in multiple communities in Massachusetts over the last several years. Rat infestations are a public health issue since rats can destroy and contaminate food and other household materials. Rats and their fleas may also transmit viruses, bacteria and parasites to humans. **Everyone** must do their part to control the problem.

What you can do to help prevent and address a rat problem in your neighborhood:

Learn about Rats:

- The Norway Rat (*Rattus Norvegicus*) is the most common rat in the North East Region. These rats are heavy set, light brown to almost black. Their droppings are capsule shaped, about three quarters of an inch long.
- Rats generally live for one year at which time they can have six to twelve “pups” per litter, up to seven times a year!
- Rats burrow in the ground, under buildings and rubbish; usually living well within 150 feet of food and water sources.
- Rats require roughly one ounce of food a day and a half ounce of water. They feed habitually on familiar food, preferring meats and grains, and are cautious of new items or new food.
- Rats can jump up to three feet and climb wires and pipes very well. Keep doors and windows screened with half-inch mesh hardware cloth.
- They can gnaw through plastic, wood, soft metals, wire, and even cinderblock and brick.
- Rats can squeeze into the tiniest of spaces.



Find the Rats:

- Rats make their presence known by leaving burrows, droppings, gnaw marks and rub marks, tracks, trails, nests and hidden food stashes.
- Routinely check the perimeter of your dwelling, yard and any sheds or fences for evidence of burrows.
- Routinely check trash barrels for evidence of gnawed holes on the bottom and sides.



Rat Burrows beneath structures



Rat Burrows in Yard



Mouse vs. Rat droppings



Rat in trash barrel with no lid and exposed trash bag

STARVE THE RATS!

DEPRIVE THEM OF FOOD!

DEPRIVE THEM OF WATER!

- Use rodent-proof containers with tight-fitting lids for garbage and other trash. Do NOT store or put trash out for pick-up in bags only. Use bags only as liners inside rodent-proof containers (heavy duty plastic or metal).



- Wash trash and recycling containers and the areas around them frequently.

- Use rodent-proof containers to store food and pet food.

- Clean up after pets: Rats will feed on leftover pet food and even pet waste!

- Be aware of rodent activity in and around outdoor gardens and fruit plants in your yard. Rats will eat fresh fruits and vegetables! Keep your garden and composter free from rodents:

1. Maintain the right ratio: your compost bin should always be 3 parts "brown" to 1 part "green".
2. Always cover up food scraps in your composter with leaves, paper towels, or other "brown" carbon materials. Rinse out eggshells to avoid odors that can attract rodents. Meat, bones, fat, dairy, or foods cooked with oil or butter should not be placed in a compost bin.



3. Pick up fallen fruit or garden vegetables.
4. Keep your composter at least 1.5 feet from any wall and the area around it free from weeds or tall grass.
5. Keep your composter moist and active; turn frequently.
6. Tightly shut the lid on the compost bin.
7. Use 1/2-inch wire mesh to place underneath your composter to prevent burrowing.
8. Put bird food in feeders only and don't overfeed. Store seeds in containers with tight lids. Clean up spills daily.

Evict the Rats:

- Plug holes in floors and walls with wire mesh (copper, stainless or aluminum). For holes inside, cover the mesh with spackle, plaster or hardening sealant.
- Repair broken windows, doors, screens and roofs.
- Tear down or repair dilapidated fences, sheds and garages.
- Remove abandoned vehicles, appliances, construction debris, woodpiles and tires from yards.
- Routinely mow lawns and trim shrubbery.

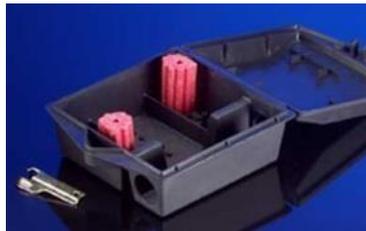
Exterminate the Rats:

The best way to deal with rats on your property is to hire a licensed pest management professional (ask to see his / her Massachusetts License), who incorporates Integrated Pest Management (IPM) Practices.

- **Never place traps or poison where children or pets can reach them.**



Bait Box along exterior wall



Open Bait Box showing bait and lock



Rat Trap

- If you perform pest control yourself, carefully read and follow labels on all traps and poison.
- Lay traps in areas where activity has been noted, and place no more than 20 feet apart.
- When emptying a trap or if you find a dead rat, do not handle it with bare hands; use gloves or tools and place within a trash receptacle.

Organize your neighbors and friends:

- Work with your neighbors to rid your neighborhood of rats. Everyone must do their part to control these pests.
- Consider creating a rodent watch group in your neighborhood to identify and correct areas that may be providing food or harborage for rodents.