

Reports of rats tend to increase during warmer months, particularly where food, water, and shelter are readily available. Rats are highly adaptable, breed rapidly, and can spread diseases such as leptospirosis. They are legally classified as vermin, and it is illegal to capture and release them elsewhere.

Where land is publicly owned, the local authority is responsible for pest control. In all other cases, responsibility rests with the landowner or occupier.

Residents can help reduce the risk by taking the following simple precautions:

Preventative Measures

- Keep rubbish and recycling securely contained, with lids firmly closed. Even food odours can attract rats.
- Avoid leaving pet food or bird food outside overnight.
- Clean beneath bird feeders regularly to remove spilled seed.
- Store animal feed, compost, and garden materials in sealed containers. Do not add meat, dairy, or cooked food to compost heaps.
- Remove sources of standing water where possible.
- Keep sheds, garages, and gardens tidy to reduce nesting opportunities.
- Check for holes or gaps around buildings and block access points where safe to do so.
- Keep grass and vegetation well maintained, as long grass provides cover and nesting areas.
- Planting strong-smelling herbs such as mint, lavender, or garlic may help deter rats in some areas.
- Take care when gardening and wear gloves due to the risk of contamination from rat urine.

Deterrents

Rats have a strong sense of smell and may avoid intense odours. Some residents use cotton wool soaked in peppermint, eucalyptus, or citronella oil near entry points or enclosed spaces, although effectiveness can vary.

Control Measures

- To reduce or remove rats on your property:
- Humane traps designed to kill instantly are generally recommended.
- Traps should be placed along known rat pathways (e.g. along fences or walls), as rats tend to follow established routes.
- Some methods, such as poison, may be effective but carry risks, including harm to pets and wildlife through secondary poisoning.
- If the issue persists, consider engaging a professional pest control service.

Reporting

To report rats in public spaces, please contact the District Council at: eandr@nfdc.gov.uk. Include the location of the sighting and your contact details.

Working together as a community will help minimise the risk and impact of rat infestations.