

Rats

Rats are a major health risk to the community. They cause serious health concerns by:

- Contributing to the spread of diseases such as the Plague, Dysentery, Leptosperosis and typhus fever.
- Carrying fleas, lice and ticks that have adverse affects on pets and humans.
- Depositing excrement and hair causing contamination of food and utensils resulting in food poisoning.
- Generating terrible odours that effect living conditions.
- Damaging buildings, pipes, conduits and electrical wiring by chewing insulation etc, resulting in increased maintenance costs and even electrical fires.
- Causing excess noise during night time activities resulting in loss of sleep.

Many people also find the presence of rodents unacceptable.

Rat Behaviour

As a rat's teeth grow continually, gnawing is a necessary behaviour. Almost any kind of material may be gnawed i.e. electrical cable, water pipes. Rats burrow into grassy banks, underneath sheds and if given access can exploit cavities in walls and roof spaces of buildings, which they use for harbourage, to store food and often nest. Rats prefer to live close to sources of both food and water.

Rats are also good climbers and can climb vertical walls if the surface is sufficiently rough. They can also climb along fences and up bird tables to access food.

Rats normally come out at night and usually are not seen unless they are hungry or present in large numbers.

Signs of infestation

Indications of whether rats are present are as follows:

- Sighting rats
- Presence of droppings (dark, cigar shaped droppings, 12mm-18mm long)
- Signs of eaten fruit and vegetables either in the garden or within the premises.
- Greasy rub marks along paths they travel(usually along floor wall junctions).
- Burrow holes around buildings.
- Signs of gnawing damage.
- Increased excitability activity for dogs, cats and birds.
- Squeaking, gnawing or movement noises in walls, cupboards, floors and ceilings.
- Accumulated snail shells with sides chewed out.

Ways to Reduce Rat Problems

The number of rats can be reduced around and within properties by denying them food and shelter.

The following is a list of precautions that may prevent rat from infesting your area:

Disclaimer: This information sheet is a guide only and is considered to be correct as of July 2014 and may be updated without any notice. Verification with original Acts, Regulations, Local Laws, Planning Schemes and other relevant documents is recommended for detailed references. The City of Wanneroo accepts no responsibility for errors or emissions.

- Keep gardens clean and tidy, cutting back overgrown areas to minimise harbourage.
- Remove matured fruit and nuts from trees.
- If feeding wild birds, store food in containers, ensuring rats cannot reach the food. Any uneaten food will encourage rats to your garden.
- Keep pet dishes clean and store bulk pet food in inaccessible areas such as sealed containers.
- Inspect your property ensuring that there are no entry holes for rats to gain access into your home, ie. around waste pipes from the kitchen and bathrooms, central heating pipes and air vents.
- Ensure drains are covered and that manholes are intact ie. no rat holes are present in the near vicinity of the manhole.
- Ensure all household waste is enclosed in a rat proof container, eg wheelie bin.
- Keep doors closed to prevent access.
- Store firewood away from fences and off the ground by at least 40cm. Firewood is a common nesting area.
- Avoid leaving potential rat shelters around the property such as car body parts, boxes, old furniture etc.

Eliminating Rats - Baiting and Trapping

Poisoning baits have been proven to be one of the most effective ways of reducing rat problems. The following recommendations are to be taken into account when using rodent baits:

- Follow the manufacturers instructions carefully
- Store all excess poisoning baits out of reach of children and pets.
- Some poisoning baits may have detrimental effect on animals (refer to manufacturers warnings).

The City of Wanneroo offers free rat baits to residents and may be picked up from the Civic Centre.

Rat traps are another effective way to control rat numbers. The best recommended bait is bacon, fish, almonds and other nuts, peanut butter, apple, pumpkin seeds and sausage.

Should you require any further information regarding this matter, please contact the City of Wanneroo's Health Services on 9405 5000 or visit <http://www.public.health.wa.gov.au>