

Best Management Practices: Urban Rat Control

Rats can cause extensive damage to buildings, vehicles, and other infrastructure. Effective rat control starts with taking preventive measures to avoid getting rats in your yard, home or place of business.

Rat Identification

Roof or black rat:

Grey-brown with white or black underside.

Long and thin with scaly tail.

Large ears and eyes.

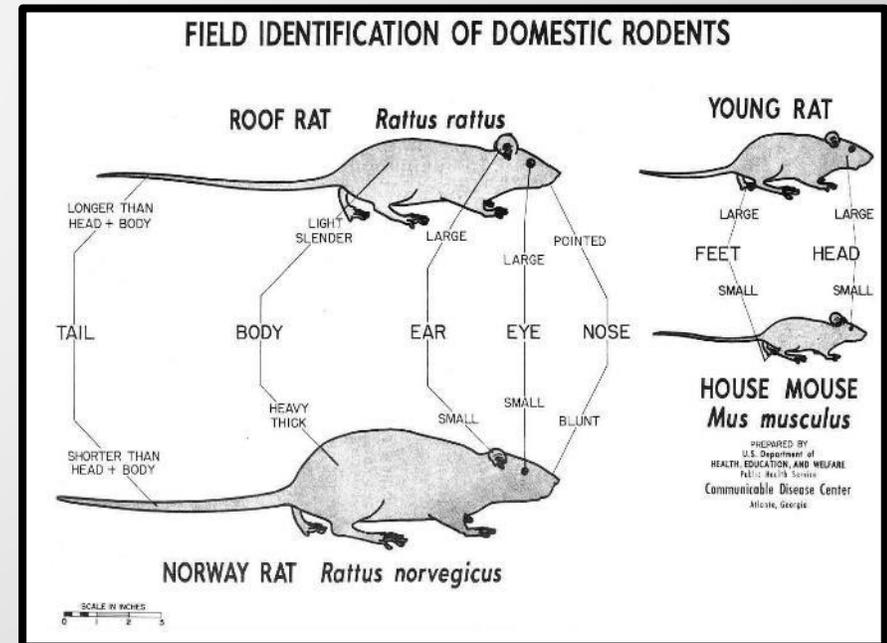


Norway rat:

Brown with scattered black hair and grey to white underside.

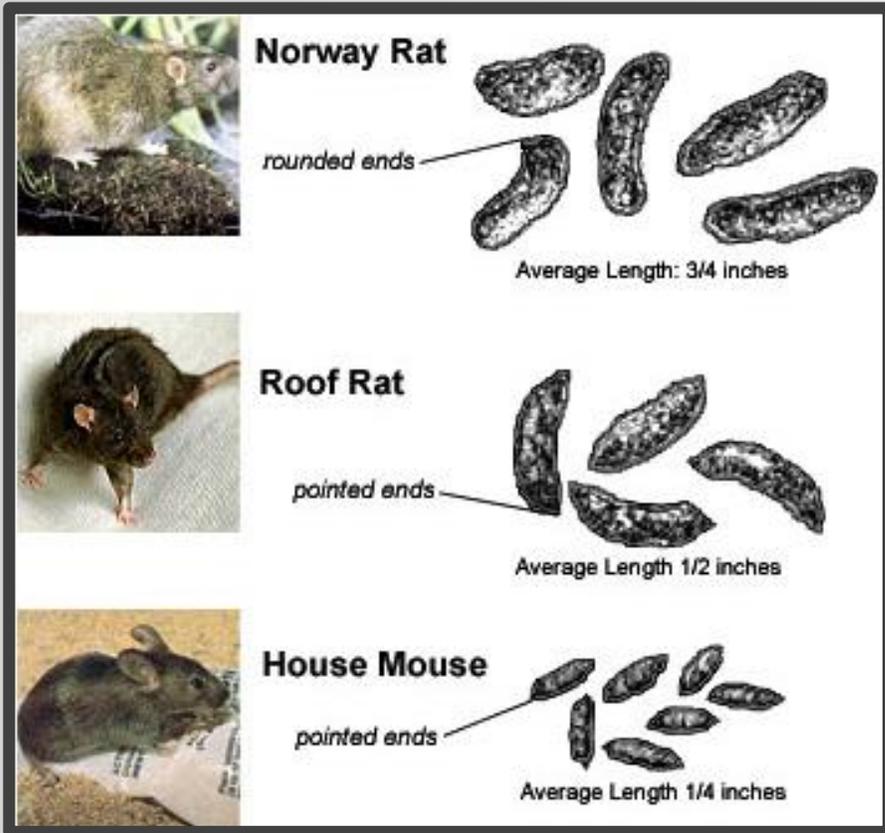
Long, heavy bodied, blunt muzzle.

Small ears and eyes.



Roof or black rat versus Norway rat

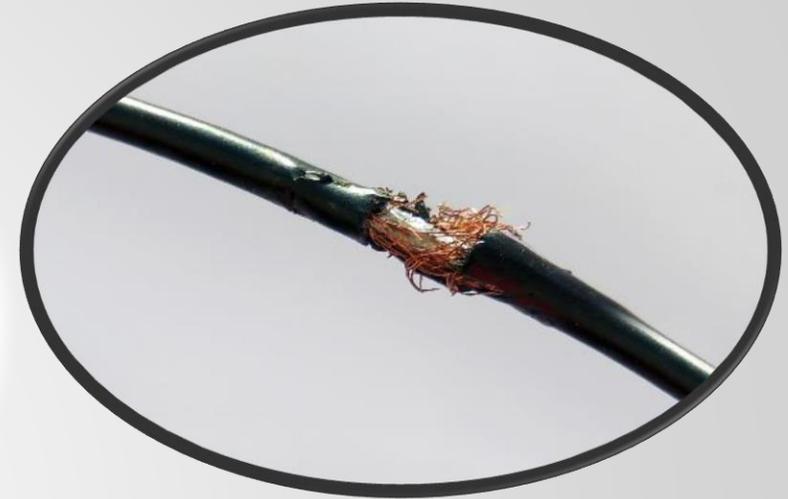
Signs of rats



- Rodent droppings – [the size and shape](#) can help determine whether you have a mouse or rat infestation.



- Noise in walls or ceilings.



- Chew marks on structures, cables, holes in bags, and containers storing food.



- Areas occupied by rats have a musky smell. One dead rat can cause considerable odor.

Rat Management: Simple Preventative Measures

Prevent access to all favourable rat nesting areas such as buildings, sheds and underneath garden patios and hut tubs. Carefully inspect and ensure there are no openings and cracks where rats can enter.

Pet Food:

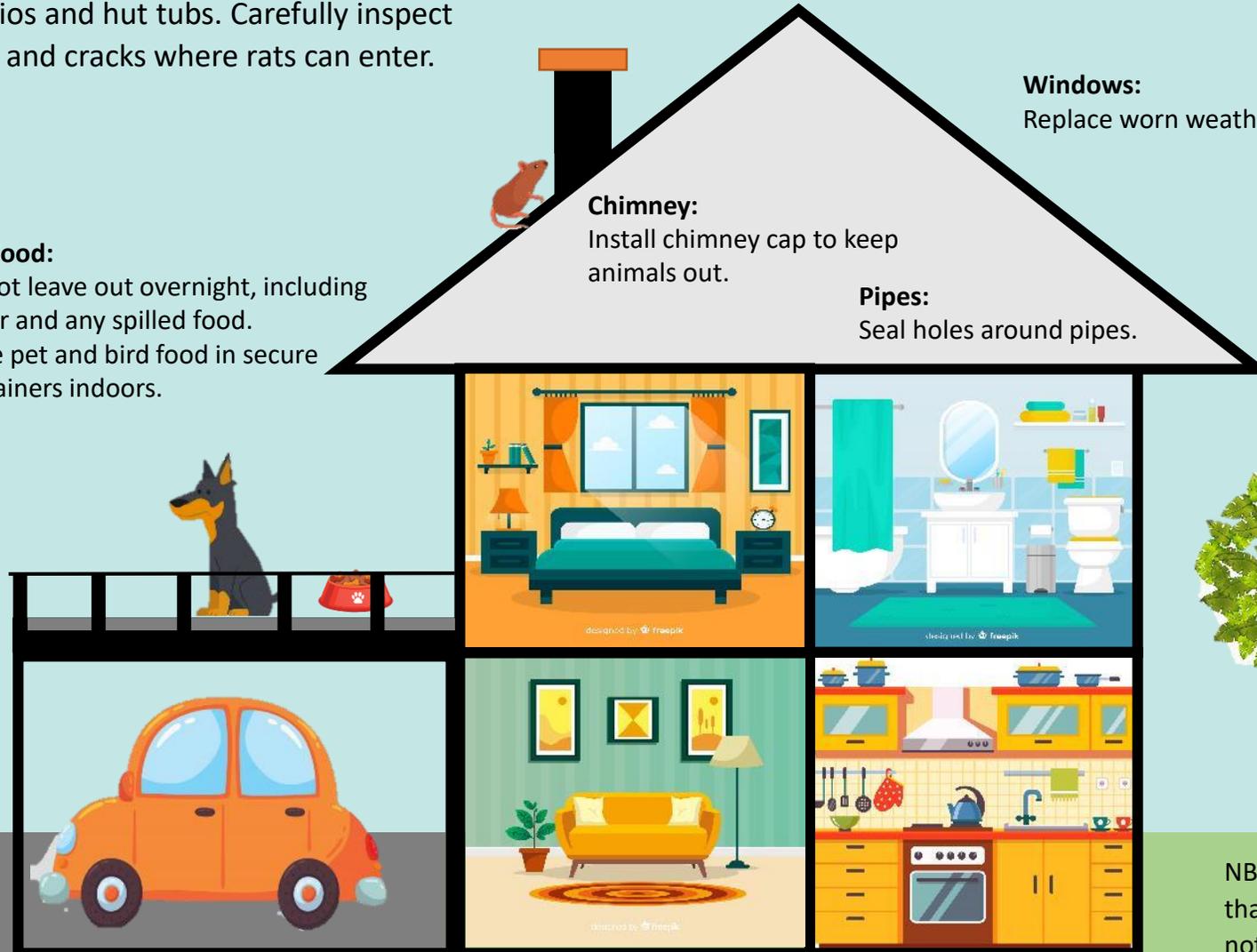
Do not leave out overnight, including water and any spilled food. Store pet and bird food in secure containers indoors.

Pet Droppings:

Clean up pet droppings – rats can subsist on a diet of droppings.

Outdoor bins:

Keep sealed and away from house. Do not leave bags out in the open.



Chimney:

Install chimney cap to keep animals out.

Windows:

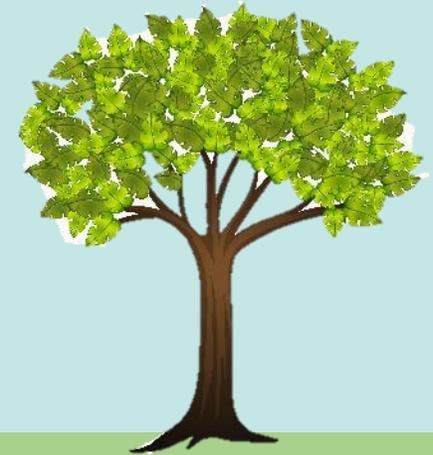
Replace worn weather strips.

Pipes:

Seal holes around pipes.

Trees and hedges:

Keep branches trimmed 1 m away from house.



Garage & Storage Rooms:

Store items in plastic containers and off the floor. Cover air vents with galvanized mesh.

Kitchen:

Store food in air tight containers.

NB: If you are sealing up an opening ensure that other species such as bats or birds are not present. Be particularly cautious in the spring/summer when the above-mentioned species might have young.

Rat Management: Simple Preventative Measures



Rats are nocturnal so take bird feeders in at night and rake up fallen seed from the ground.

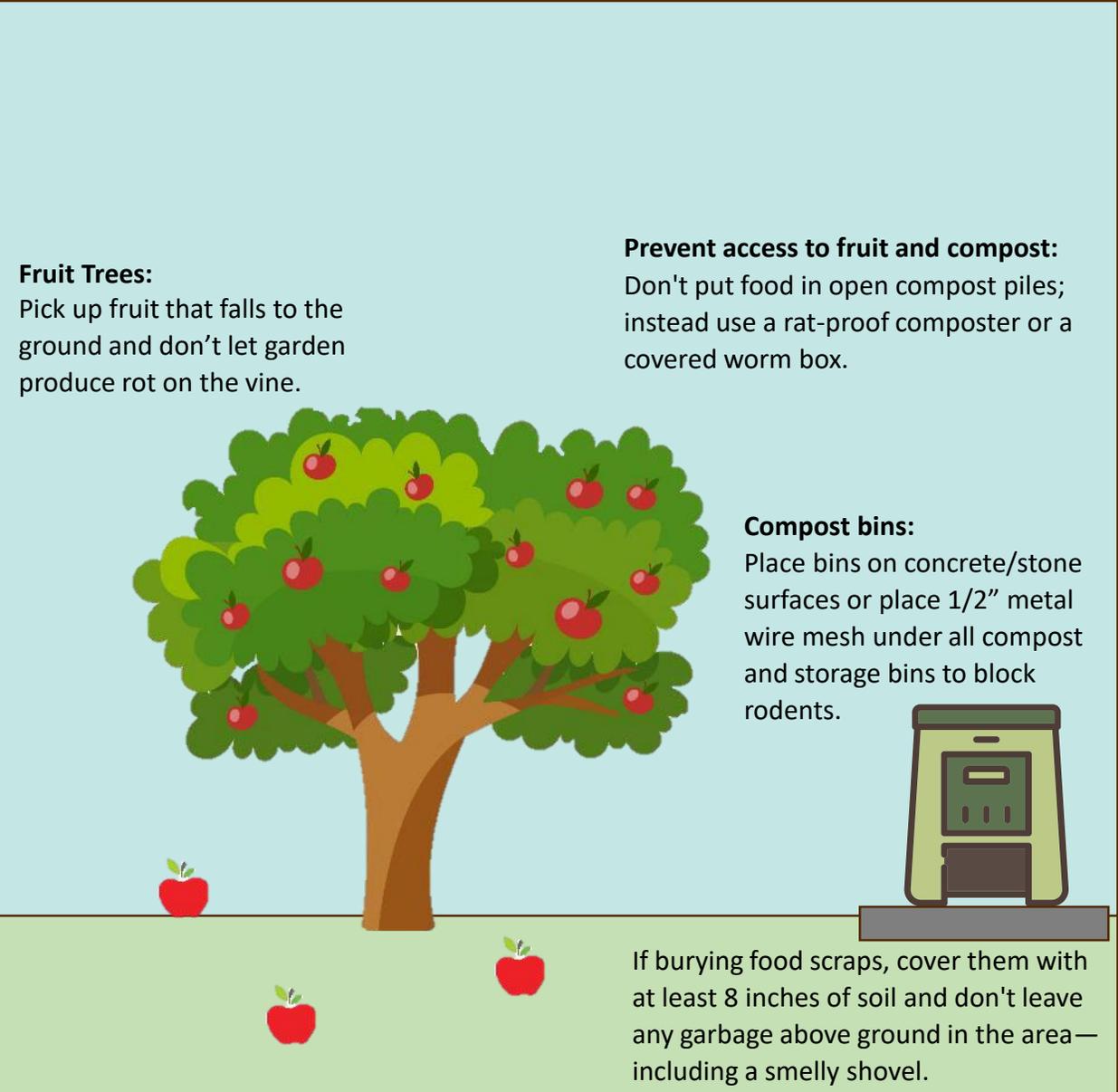
Birdfeeders:

Do not feed on the ground; restrict your feeding to rodent-proof hanging feeders.

Buy quality over quantity:

Offer food that leaves minimal waste: i.e. peanut granules, sunflower hearts.

Use a **seed catcher** to keep spilled seed from reaching the ground.



Fruit Trees:

Pick up fruit that falls to the ground and don't let garden produce rot on the vine.

Prevent access to fruit and compost:

Don't put food in open compost piles; instead use a rat-proof composter or a covered worm box.

Compost bins:

Place bins on concrete/stone surfaces or place 1/2" metal wire mesh under all compost and storage bins to block rodents.

If burying food scraps, cover them with at least 8 inches of soil and don't leave any garbage above ground in the area—including a smelly shovel.

Prevent access to food and water: Store food and garbage in sealed heavy-duty containers.

Rat Control

Trapping and poisoning is not an effective long-term solution since more rats will be attracted to your property if the above prevention measures are not followed carefully.

If attractants have been removed, points of entry have been sealed and you still have signs of rat activity, there are a number of trapping options available.

Snap Traps

Snap traps specifically designed to trap rats can be an effective method to control rats.

Snap traps are considered more humane than poison and if set correctly, should kill the rat instantly.

Snap traps also allow you to confirm success and safely dispose of the dead rat which eliminates the chances of a rat dying in a location where you cannot access it (i.e. in between walls, in roof or underneath floor boards).



NB: Don't set snap traps outside without using a tunnel (trapping box)/bait station. Otherwise you might accidentally kill or injure a pet, or other wildlife. Rats are nocturnal - trapping boxes should only be placed outside at night, as non-target animals may enter the trapping box in the daytime.

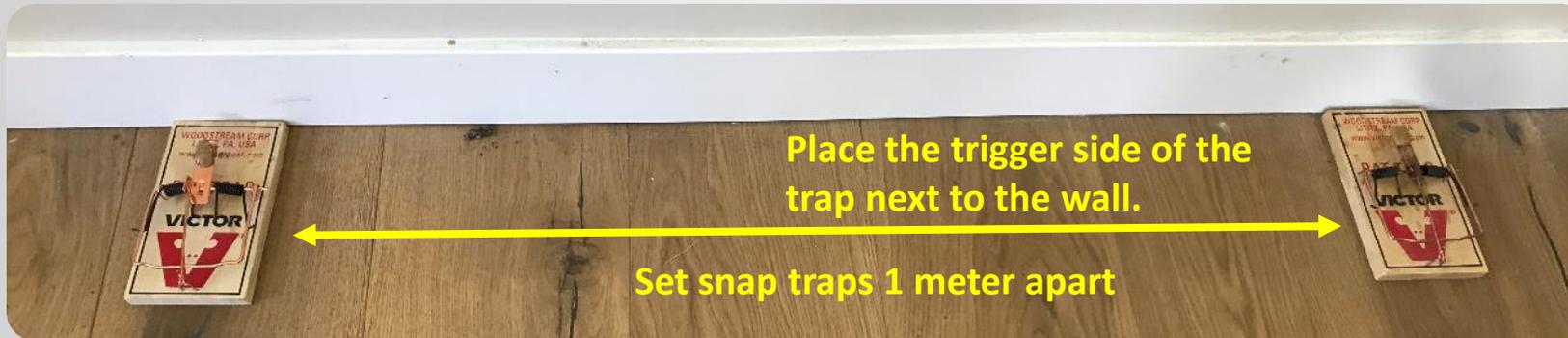


Snap Traps continued

Rats are very suspicious of changes in their environment, so it is important to pre-bait the traps before you set them.

When setting and baiting traps use plastic gloves to avoid leaving a human scent.

Choose a food that the rats cannot resist and sticks to the trap (i.e. peanut or hazelnut butter with oats or dried fruit), you might have to try a couple of times before you find the perfect bait.



Check traps every 3-5 days and re-set and bait trap as needed.

If rats are travelling along rafters and pipes, fasten the traps to these locations using screws or wire.

Place traps along routes travelled by rats next to walls, behind objects, in dark corners, or close to where the rat enters/exits a structure.

You should detect a decline in the signs of rats within 4 weeks of trapping.

For more information see: [Setting a victor rat trap](#)

Glue Boards and Sticky Traps

Glue boards and sticky traps are NOT recommended, as they have been found to be inhumane and there is also a significant risk of accidentally killing non-target animals like songbirds and bats.

Rodenticides

Research has shown us that non-target wildlife in BC is being poisoned by rodenticides when consuming rodenticides directly or when eating rodenticide poisoned prey.

Rodenticides should only be used as a last resort in a targeted and efficient manner.

It can take up to 7-10 days before a rat dies from consuming rodenticides. During this lag-time the exposed rat can be consumed by a predator, such as an owl or pet.



Cases of secondary poisoning of owls and hawks are increasing in the Okanagan and elsewhere.



The instant kill, self-resetting bolt trap developed by Goodnature© is new to North America and can be ordered online.



If you are seeing more than five rats on your property, contact a professional pest control company.

Rodenticides Continued

Rodenticides should only be placed in securely fastened approved tamper resistant bait stations. Bait stations should be placed in strategic locations. See recommendations under “snap traps”.

Be aware that the active ingredient in the rodenticide product determines where the product can be applied (i.e. outdoor or indoor only).

Depending on the active ingredient there is a thousand-fold difference in the toxicity of the product, indoor only products are more toxic and persistent - so carefully read the instructions on the product label.



Always check the active ingredient and the permitted usage of the product before applying.

Monitor bait stations and general treatment area every 2-3 days to:

- remove and safely dispose of any carcasses.
- re-stock bait if needed and clean up any spillage.
- ensure bait stations are still securely fastened.
- check for evidence of non-target species entering and feeding on bait, bird feces inside bait station or dead non-targets species found nearby.



Rodenticides Continued

If there is no decline in rat activity within 35 days or bait is still being consumed- reassess the situation:

- ensure that preventive measures have been fully implemented.
- discuss preventative measures with neighbours to coordinate efforts for better success.
- move bait stations to areas that are frequented by rats.

Aim for short effective, and targeted treatments. Only leave bait out when there is a rat infestation to control. It should never be left out permanently on a “just in case” basis.



More Information:

For up to date information on where rodenticides can be applied see [the Health Canada - Pest Management Regulatory Agency website](#)

For more information on how to control rats:
[Living with wildlife: Old world rats](#)

[WildSafeBC: Rats](#)

[Safe Rodent Control Resource Center](#)

