

RECOGNIZING ROOF RAT ACTIVITY

The following signs indicate roof rat activity:

- Damaged or partially eaten fruit
- Broken snail shells under bushes, on fences or near nesting sites
- Gnawing of plastic, wood or rubber materials
- Greasy, dark rub marks along walls caused by the rat's oily fur coming in contact with painted surfaces or wooden beams
- Droppings that are randomly scattered - they will normally be found close to a runway, feeding location or shelter; droppings are dark in color, spindle-shaped and about 1/2 inch long
- Droppings found in forced air heaters, swimming pool heater covers, and water heater closets
- Visual sightings of the rats on utility cables, fences, or in trees

RODENT-PROOFING HOMES

Homes, garages and storage areas are ideal nesting places for rodents. Roof rats can enter small openings the size of a 1/4 inch.

Take these steps to rodent-proof a home:

- Seal openings where utilities enter buildings with metal screening or concrete
- Eliminate any openings between roof tiles along the eaves
- Check for gaps between the roof and chimney
- Use sheet metal edging along door bottoms to prevent entry
- Repair or replace damaged vent screens
- Store pet food in tight fitting metal containers
- Ensure hedges or trees do not touch or hang over the house
- Remove and discard ripe and fallen fruit
- Elevate stored items at least 18 inches above ground and 12 inches from walls

CHECK FOR THESE PROBLEM AREAS:

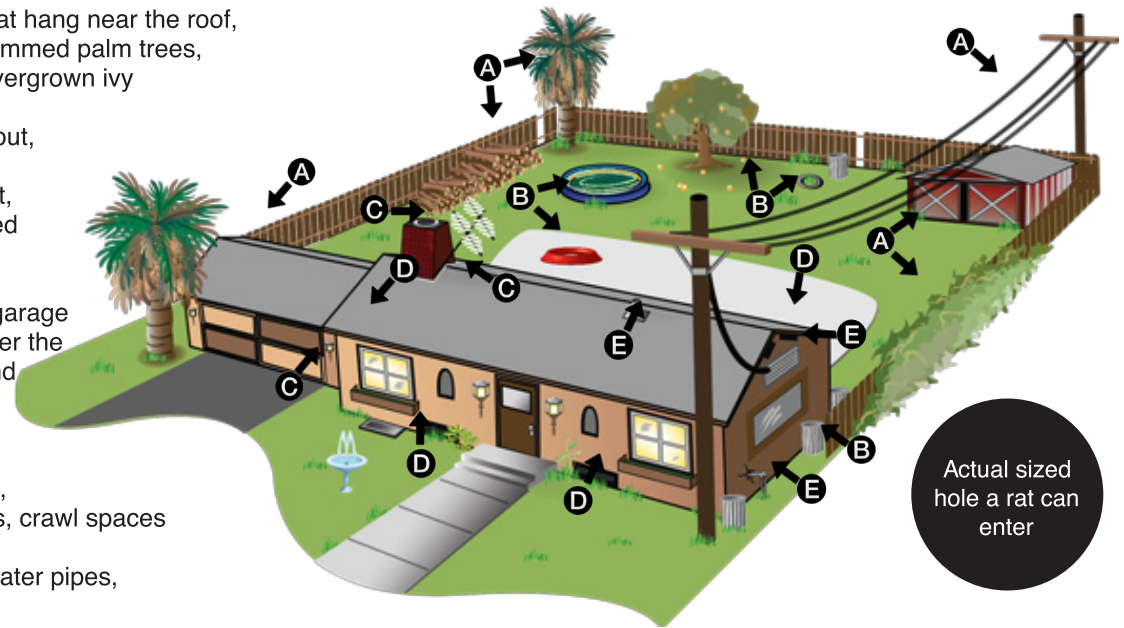
A) Tree limbs that hang near the roof, wood piles, untrimmed palm trees, storage shed, overgrown ivy

B) Pet food left out, stagnant water, unharvested fruit, debris, uncovered trash cans

C) Gaps under garage doors; gaps under the chimney, roof and chimney spark arrestor

D) Tile openings, vents, attic vents, crawl spaces

E) Vent pipes, water pipes, attic louvers



ROOF RAT HABITAT

Roof rats may establish nests almost anywhere. Here are some common sites:

- Wood and lumber piles
- Barbeques
- Utility sheds/closets
- Pool heaters
- Dense shrubbery

Roof rats will eat almost anything but they do have preferences. Here are some of their favorites:

- Bird seeds
- Pet food
- Snails
- Pet droppings
- Nuts
- Avocados
- Oranges
- Tomatoes
- Fruits

TRAPPING

Snap traps are an acceptable, efficient and humane method for rat control. Wooden snap traps are inexpensive and eliminate the liability of using poison bait. Suggested bait options are grape tomatoes, peanut butter, beef jerky, dried fruit or nuts. When trapping outdoors or in an unsecured area, cover the trap with a plastic basket or similar cover with small openings to keep out larger non-target animals.

PROPER DISPOSAL OF A RAT CARCASS

Using a plastic bag or shovel, place your hand in the bag like a glove, pick up the carcass with the bag, turn the bag inside out and tie. Another option can be to use a shovel to scoop the rat into a bag, seal it and dispose of the rat in the trash container with a secure lid.

THE ROOF RAT



The roof rat (*Rattus rattus*) is a common and problematic rodent species in Orange County.

The roof rat is slender and has a tail longer than its head and body combined. Roof rats frequently enter buildings and maneuver around neighborhoods by using utility lines and fences as runways. The roof rat prefers to feed on bird seed, pet food, snails, fruit and nuts.

THE BIG-EARED WOOD RAT



The big-eared wood rat (*Neotoma macrotis*) is native to Southern California. The rat is tan to cinnamon in color and has large rounded ears. The tail is as long as its body. Wood rats build large elaborate houses out of sticks and plants. They feed on bird seeds and pet food.

DISEASE

Rats collected in Orange County are known to carry pathogens that can make people sick.

- The most common pathway of exposure to rodent-borne diseases is through consumption of food or water contaminated with rodent feces and urine.
- Rats and rat nests can be infested with biting mites and fleas. Mites and fleas can transmit illnesses to humans.

WHY DO I HAVE RATS?

Your property provides at least one of these attractants. Follow these steps to help reduce rats on your property.

Food Sources

- Remove any bird seed and uneaten pet food
- Place pet food in sealed metal containers
- Harvest ripe fruit from trees
- Control for snails
- Ensure trash cans are closed with tightly fitted lids

Shelter

- Remove and/or cut back overgrown vegetation and dense shrubbery
- Seal barbeques and sheds
- Stack firewood/lumber away from fences and walls
- Seal structural openings to your residence and garage

MISSION

It is the mission of the Orange County Mosquito and Vector Control District (OCMVCD) to protect the people of Orange County from the dangers of vector-borne diseases. A major component of our program is to educate the public about the shared responsibility of vector control. OCMVCD staff work year-round to ensure protection for you and your community from rats and the diseases they carry.

For More Information:

Orange County Mosquito and Vector Control District

13001 Garden Grove Blvd.
Garden Grove, CA 92843
714.971.2421 or 949.654.2421
www.ocvector.org

RATS

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