

# RAT CONTROL IN RESIDENTIAL AREAS

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Roof Rat

## GENERAL INFORMATION

The roof rat (*Rattus rattus*) is the problem rat in Orange County. This rat is slender, agile, and a good climber. They feed on a variety of fruits and nuts such as oranges, walnuts, avocados, plums, peaches, and apricots grown in residential backyards. Roofrats typically nest in large overgrown ivy patches, piles of lumber and firewood, yucca plants, and palm trees. They also may be found nesting in old furniture, storage sheds, and inside buildings. The roof rat goes by many aliases such as the tree rat, fruit rat, black rat, and power line rat.

## RAT CONTROL

Rats may be trapped using snap traps available at most nurseries and hardware stores. For best results, bait the trigger of the snap trap with either peanut butter mixed with oatmeal, freshly cooked bacon, nutmeats, or pieces of apple.

## POISONS

The safest rodenticides presently used in rat control are anticoagulant formulations which require several feedings to be effective. The homeowner may purchase these rodenticides at nurseries, hardware stores, and farm supply stores.

## PROPER DISPOSAL OF A RAT CARCASS

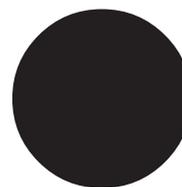
Using a plastic bag, place your hand in the bag like a glove, pick up the carcass with the bag, invert the bag or turn bag inside out, tie a knot at the end of the bag, and dispose of rat in a trash container with a secure lid.

## BUILDING MAINTENANCE

Keeping rats out of the home and other buildings is an important element of rat control. Roof rats can gain access into the interior of a building or residence through small exterior openings. Therefore, all ventilation ports, basement windows, attic vents and louvers, vent pipes and shafts, mobile home base skirts, and other access points should be sealed or screened using 1/4 inch hardware cloth to exclude rats. Gaps around pipes and electrical conduits, as well as cracks around doors and windows, also should be sealed.

**\* REMEMBER \***

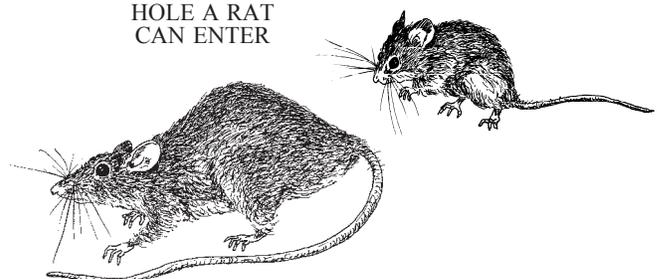
Rodents can enter through very small openings.



ACTUAL SIZE  
HOLE A RAT  
CAN ENTER



ACTUAL SIZE  
HOLE A MOUSE  
CAN ENTER



## STEPS TO RAT CONTROL

The following is the recommended sequence of steps to control rats around the home.

### STEP 1. Eliminate Food

- Remove all potential sources of food from the premises. This includes bird seed left out for birds. Routinely harvest ripe fruit and pick up all fruit that has fallen to the ground.
- Store pet food in metal containers with tight sealing lids and do not leave uneaten pet food outdoors.
- Control snails and clean up pet feces because they are favored food items.
- Keep trash cans closed at all times with tightly fitted lids.

### STEP 2. Destroy Rats

- Rats should be snap trapped if they are inside a residence or building. Poisoning with baits indoors is not recommended because a rat may die inside the structure and create an odor and fly problem.
- Place traps near nesting areas or where rats are likely to hide. Do not place traps where children or pets will disturb or be harmed by them. Remember, snap traps are *DANGEROUS!*
- Remove dead rats by placing animals in tightly sealed containers for proper disposal.
- Poison baits may be used outside when following these recommended guidelines:
  - \* Use tamper-resistant bait stations.
  - \* Bait stations must be secured so they cannot be carried away or moved.
  - \* Bait stations should not be placed in the open, but hidden behind shrubbery and other objects where evidence of rat activity has been observed.
  - \* If a bait station is placed in a tree or vegetation, the station must be secured in a way so that the bait will not spill out.
  - \* Remember, these formulations are *POISONOUS* and must be placed where pets and children cannot reach them.

### STEP 3. Eliminate Shelter

- After the rats have been destroyed, harborage and nesting areas should be removed. It is important to wait until after the rats have been eliminated because they may disperse into the surrounding area when the harborage is removed. Algerian ivy, palm trees, yucca, bougainvillea, and other dense shrubbery should be thinned or eliminated completely.
- Barbecues and pool heaters are favorite nesting sites. Close off all openings with 1/4 inch hardware cloth screen.
- Firewood and lumber piles should be stacked at least 18" off the ground and 12" away from fences and walls.

### STEP 4. Maintaining a Rat Free Property

- After rats have been reduced, keep reinfestation from occurring by keeping harborage and food sources to a minimum.

Dear Resident:

Your cooperation is requested to help control rats in Orange County. This leaflet explains the elements of rat control and the habits of roof rats.

Trapping and chemical control alone will not achieve long term rat control. If the rats can be controlled and conditions that allow them to reproduce are removed, then we have achieved a longer lasting control. After the harborage has been removed, your property should be maintained harborage free, so that the rats will not find the property attractive for reinfestation. The trapping and/or chemical control of rats may be performed by a Certified Vector Control Technician from this District if you sign the Release of Liability form or you may elect to control the rats by your own means.

At the same time, we are inspecting the neighborhood to find other properties with rat harborage. The District is asking you to remove the conditions on your property that allow rats harborage. The harborage removal and maintenance is to be done after the rats are controlled.

Thank you for your cooperation.