

The Fight Against Rodents

A Neighborhood Call to Action to Eliminate Rats from the City Of Berkley



City of Berkley
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The War on Rats

Rats are the enemy. Berkley residents have seen increasingly more rats across our community. These sightings have come from all areas of the city. This document is part of a series of materials that contains information and illustrations on rat burrows, the inspection process, sanitation, trapping, baiting and more.

Rats are responsible for the transmission of many diseases. Their feeding habits are destructive, and their nesting behaviors can compromise the structure of infested buildings. They are capable of chewing through wood and concrete. Rat holes are both unsightly and dangerous; not only do they allow entry to a variety of other pests, but they also can lead to short-circuit fires if the rats gnaw on electrical wires.

Fortunately, rats behave predictably. Rats and other rodents like to live where people live and they can thrive on just one ounce of food and water per day. Good housekeeping practices, which eliminate food supply and destroy shelter needed by rats to survive, are the best defense when it comes to rat-proofing our neighborhoods.

Residents are encouraged to join forces in the war on rats. Rodent control in Berkley is everyone's responsibility.

The Norway Rat

By and large rats are some of the most common and formidable pests in the world. Specifically, the Norway rat has become too common in Metro Detroit. Norway Rats (frequently called brown or sewer rats) are a large and rotund species that can grow to lengths of about 13-16 inches when measured from their nose to the tip of their tail. Coloration is primarily gray on their underside and reddish or grayish-brown to black on the top of their body. The ears and tail of the Norway rat are hairless and the tail is shorter than the length of the rat's body. With blunt snouts, Norway rat adults weigh about 7-18 ounces. Their tails are shorter than their body length and their ears and eyes are small relative to their body.



Norway rats, as opposed to mice, generally:

- Have two front incisors are enlarged and continue to grow throughout the rat's life
- Larger than mice although young rats can sometimes be mistaken for mice
- Can be distinguished by their disproportionately long feet and oversized head have fur that is more prevalent on the body than on the ears and tail

Rats engage in constant gnawing, which causes considerable damage to homes. Both mice and rats are capable of chewing through hard, wooden surfaces, but rat teeth marks are much larger than those of mice. They run on four legs and are capable of standing upright on their two back legs.

What Do Rats Eat?

All rats prefer grains, seeds, milk, eggs, nuts, snails, and when it gets right down to it, insects, leather, fur, meat but the need to eat 1/3 of their own body weight in a single day to survive makes them fairly opportunistic feeders. Unfortunately, human environments provide rats with an abundance of resources that drive a rodent's habits. They take advantage of food sources such as garbage cans, open containers of food, pet food bowls, fruit trees, high protein pet foods, and bird seed.



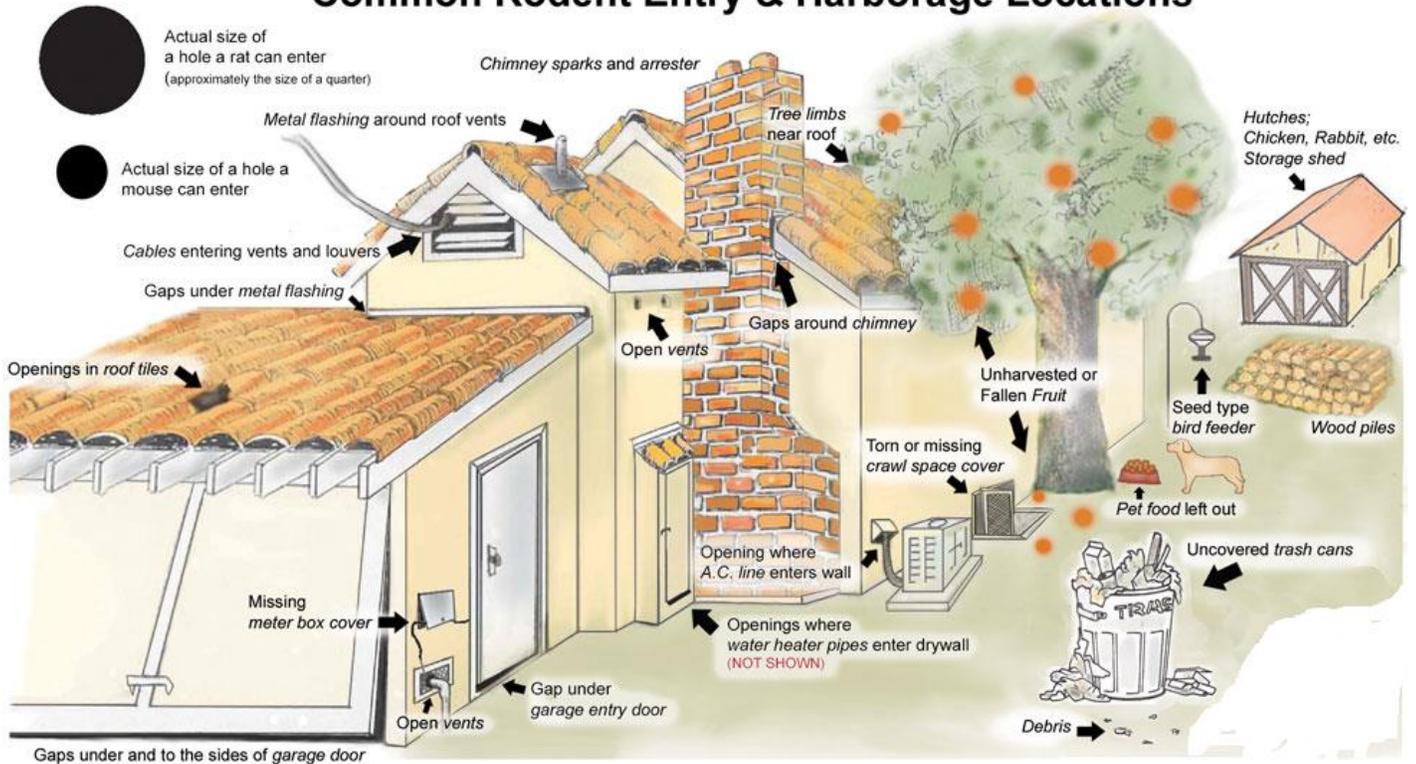
One of the largest hurdles in eradicating rats in Berkeley is the abundance of birdfeeders that provide easy access to birdseed that is high in nutrition, protein, and grains. Overfilled, messy bird feeders provide an excellent food source for rodents. The City of Berkeley, through ordinance Sec. 78-2, has placed parameters on the use of Bird Feeders in an effort to limit rodent infestations. Per the ordinance:

- No person shall feed wild birds other than by means of bird feeders elevated at least 48 inches above the ground levels.
- Birdfeeders shall be designed to be "rodent proof" or shall be properly installed with tray and baffle to prevent spillage onto the ground. No more than five birdfeeders may be placed on a lot or property.
- Properties shall be kept free of dog droppings, uneaten food, and improperly composted waste.
- No person shall leave pet or human food outside on the ground or in open containers where it is accessible to rats.
- No ground feeding.
- All garbage stored outside shall be in watertight plastic or metal containers with tight fitting covers sufficient to keep rats out. Plastic bags are not rat proof and shall not be used for overnight outside storage except when placed at curbside for weekly trash pickup.

Where do Rats Make Their Homes?

Rats prefer to live in the ground and line their nests with fibrous materials, such as shredded paper and cloth. Norway rats commonly build nests outside the walls of homes, beneath the edges of sidewalks or patios, beneath building foundations as well as near trash or within woodpiles. When those options are unavailable, they may also choose to nest in clumps ground vegetation (such as gardens and fields), shrubs, and tall grasses. These cluttered areas tend to make burrows more difficult to locate. In Berkeley, rats burrows have often been discovered under hostas, air conditioning units, low decks, and under sheds built without rat walls.

Common Rodent Entry & Harborage Locations



How Do I Spot A Rat Infestation

Most people do not see the actual rats since, by nature, rats are secretive and primarily nocturnal creatures. Daytime rodent sightings may indicate a significant population. However, signs of their presence are relatively easy to identify even when locating rat holes may prove more difficult than expected. Holes should be sought in locations where bricks, wood or tile may have rotted. Other signs include:

- **Runways or Trails:** Rodents memorize their territory through physical memory and use the same paths again and again. They prefer to move along objects. Following a run may lead to a rat's shelter.
- **Gnaw Marks:** Fresh gnaw marks are light and will darken over time.
- **Rub Marks:** Rodents leave rub marks from body oil, grease and dirt along the walls they travel. New rub marks will smear. Old rub marks are darker and may flake off.
- **Tracks:** Footprints and tail drags may be seen in dusty locations. To view difficult-to-see tracks, shine a strong flashlight at a low angle across the dust. A non-toxic tracking powder placed on a suspected rodent trail, and re-inspected the following day, also may assist in identifying tracks.
- **Upset Pets:** House pets, such as cats and dogs may become agitated when they hear rodents gnawing, digging, running and fighting.
- **Droppings/Urine/Odor:** Rat droppings are thin, black and less than 3/4-inch in length. Look for urine stains or a distinctive, musky odor. Rat droppings and urine are riddled with disease. A serious problem with rats and mice is that not only will they eat your food and your pets' food, they will also contaminate it.



Extermination And Prevention

There is no magic to rodent prevention and control. In the event of an infestation, it is best to consult a pest control professional but extermination must go hand in hand with prevention. Populations thrive and the number of rodent offspring increases with adequate food, water and harborage. Rats have a very aggressive reproduction cycle and just one breeding pair of rats is able to produce as many as 2,000 descendants in a year. Remember if rats can't feed, they can't breed. Residents can use a variety of prevention techniques.

- Use rodent-proof garbage cans with tight fitting lids to eliminate food supply.
- Plug holes with concrete or metal.
- Don't leave pet food out overnight.
- Clean up pet droppings daily.
- Don't feed wildlife. If you must have a birdfeeder, it must be 48-inches above ground level. It should be kept clean and never be overfilled.
- Sweep up excess seed and droppings under a birdfeeder daily.
- Remove material and tall vegetation that rats use for shelter. Trim weeds and brush and keep grass short (3-inches or less) to minimize cover and food sources.
- All building materials, lumber, boxes, firewood and similar items should be stored either on rat-proof paved areas or stacked 18-inches above the ground.

It is never enough for one household to eliminate all favorable conditions for rats. **Even one yard with a food source or hiding place can cause rat problems for an entire neighborhood. It takes everyone's cooperation.** Everyone from businesses to the homes to the City buildings must do their part to prevent rodent infestation. To win the fight against rodents, you and your neighbors must be united.

You are encouraged to report junk, debris and tall grass to Berkley Code Enforcement. The City's code enforcement officer is charged with ensuring that properties are maintained in compliance with the laws adopted by the City. All calls are anonymous and all complaints will be investigated. Keep in mind staff will need permission to enter a property to confirm a violation that cannot be seen from the street.

Berkley Code Enforcement

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Email: codeofficer@berkleymich.net