



## Rat Harborage – Prevention & Control Measures

### The Norway Rat



The most common type of rat found in Maryland and Charles County is the Norway Rat, also known as the brown rat, house rat, street rat, sewer rat, wharf rat and barn rat.

#### Description:

- Body length – 7 to 10 inches
- Tail – 6 to 8 inches
- Weight – 7 to 18 ounces
- Fur – coarse gray to brown to almost black – lighter fur on belly

#### Habitat:

- Lives in close association with people
- Nests in burrows dug under buildings, under low decks, walkways, along fence lines, along stream banks, around ponds and in garbage dumps
- Seldom travels more than 150 feet

#### Diseases:

Typhus, leptospirosis, trichinosis, salmonellosis, and rat bite fever may be transmitted to humans. It is important to address rat infestations promptly.

#### Habitat Modification: Remove all sources of food, water and shelter. See the checklist below:

- Use metal garbage cans with tight-fitting lids; rats will not gnaw through metal.
- Place all trash in trashcans, so it can be removed.
- Keep tight-fitting lids on trashcans to prevent rats from climbing in to find food.
- Remove leftover dog and/or cat food after each feeding.
- Remove dog, cat, and other animal manure daily, since this is a food source.
- Keep bird feed off of the ground – provide a catch tray or cease the feeding birds.

- Mow down tall weeds and grass.
- Stack lumber, wood, and building materials at least 18 inches from the ground surface. This deprives rats of a place to hide, and you can look for signs of infestation more easily.
- Remove junked cars, abandoned appliances, furniture and other bulky items, as these provide good homes for rats.
- Close holes in windows, doors, etc., with screens (1/4-inch mesh or less) or sheet metal.
- Close openings around pipes by using cement or sheet metal. Rats cannot gnaw through these materials easily.
- Use only grass, flower cuttings and leaves in compost piles. Do not include food scraps, trash or garbage.
- Vegetable Gardens: Stake or tie up as many plants as possible. Bean, cucumber and tomato plants – when left to grow on the ground provide harborage for rats.
- Pick up fruit or vegetables that have fallen from the plant and dispose of them in trash containers. Garden rows should be kept free of grass and weeds, as these also provide harborage for rats.

### **Damage Prevention and Control Methods:**

- 1) Exclusion: Seal all openings larger than ½ inch, including around doors, windows and foundations. Metal collars, shields, hardware cloth and masonry may be used to reduce opening size.
- 2) Poisons: Follow the directions on the manufacturer’s label, or call a licensed professional exterminator. Examples of pesticides include: d-Con, Ramik, Furmarin, ContraxP, Talon, Prolin, Rozol and Ramki.
- 3) Traps: Follow the directions on the manufacturer’s label or call a professional exterminator.

For more information please contact the Charles County Department of Health, Environmental Health Services Division at (301) 609-6751 or visit [www.charlescountyhealth.org](http://www.charlescountyhealth.org).

Additional information may also be obtained by visiting the following websites:

[https://mda.maryland.gov/plants-pests/Pages/pest\\_control\\_info\\_for\\_homeowners.aspx](https://mda.maryland.gov/plants-pests/Pages/pest_control_info_for_homeowners.aspx)

[https://mda.maryland.gov/plants-pests/Documents/Rodent\\_Manual.pdf](https://mda.maryland.gov/plants-pests/Documents/Rodent_Manual.pdf)