



TOWN OF CARVER

Board of Health

108 Main Street, Carver, MA 02330
508-866-3420

Public Service Announcement
September 2021

According to the Department of Public Health, there are many complaints/concerns regarding the sighting of rats throughout the Commonwealth. There has been a substantial increase in the small mammal population (rats, squirrels, chipmunks, rabbits and mice). This increase is directly related to a significant decrease in natural predators such as coyotes, fox and the like. This nature imbalance is the main reason why people are seeing small animals in abundance.

The Board of Health suggests the following:

- Curtail the use of bird feeders and if you chose to use them, sweep up any unused food that accumulates under the feeders.
- Make sure that water is not allowed to collect in open containers.
- Store all trash in rodent proof containers.
- Keep all feed and animal food inside.
- Clean up clutter and debris from your yard.
- Hire a certified pest control company to conduct a site review and assessment.
- See attached for additional information.

Rats have been responsible for transmitting a number of diseases to humans, including plague, rat bite fever, murine typhus, leptospirosis and salmonellosis. By assisting residents in helping reduce rat populations, we are able to minimize the disease potential created by their presence in and around our homes. Our response may also help prevent damage to property that often results from rodent activity. Property damage from rodents' gnawing may range from holes in floors and walls to damaged electrical wiring that may cause a fire.

Sanitarians respond to complaints about rat activity by conducting surveys, baiting only when necessary with an EPA registered product, and by providing rodent-proofing recommendations that may help a homeowner eliminate conditions that serve to attract and sustain rodents. The effective reduction of rodent populations often requires homeowners and communities to work together to eliminate sources of food, water, and harborage.

Signs of rat activity:

- **Burrows**
These are holes in the ground made by rats. They are about 4 inches wide and lead to nests. They are often found under decks, patios, porches, garages, piles of trash and compost piles.



- **Chewed holes**

These may be found in garage walls, doors, garbage bags and cans, bags of pet food or birdseed and other similar places.



- **Droppings**

These are usually $\frac{3}{4}$ of an inch long. They are shiny and black when fresh, and grey and crumbly when older.



Factors that contribute to rat activity:

- **Food**
Rats must have a food source to survive. When a rat finds a food source, it is likely to build a nest nearby and reproduce. Food sources are found in yards and garages and can lead to a rodent problem. They include **garbage, bird seed, peanuts, pet food, dog waste, and fruit and nuts that have fallen to the ground from trees.** Eliminating food sources is the best way to prevent rodent activity.

- **Hiding places**

Rats like to build their nests in hidden areas under structures and trash piles where they feel safe. A rat will look for a hiding place after it has found a food source nearby.

- **Water**
Rats need water to survive. Locations with standing water or property near bodies of water are more likely to support rat activity.

How to prevent rodent activity:

- Keep garbage in sturdy cans with tight-fitting lids.
- Don't feed pets outside. Don't leave pet food out overnight or for long periods of time during the day.
- Don't feed birds, squirrels or other wildlife. Birdseed, peanuts and other food left on the ground will attract rats.
- Eliminate standing water if possible.
- Cover or seal all openings into your house or garage. A rat can fit through a space as small as $\frac{1}{2}$ inch. Cover basement floor drains with properly fitted lids.
- Use compost bins that have holes no bigger than $\frac{1}{4}$ inch.
- Don't let trash and junk pile up in your yard, shed, or garage.

Eliminating rat activity:

- Identify and remove food sources.
- Look for burrows and other signs of rat activity.
- Use rodent bait or traps to get rid of existing rat activity.
- Make all necessary changes to your home and yard to prevent future rat problems.