

Business Advisory Sheet 13

Eradicating Rats and Mice in Food Premises



Rattus norvegicus
(Brown "common/sewer" Rat)



Rattus rattus
(Black "ship" Rat)



Mus domesticus
(House Mouse)

Rats and mice carry most of the major food poisoning organisms in their gut and because they can climb they are likely to contaminate, food, drink, equipment and all areas of a premises.

Where a member of the Environmental Health Team has identified an infestation of rats or mice at a food premises, it is most important to control the infestation as quickly as possible, to remove risk to health and risk to foodstuffs. Any infestation is a serious matter and must be eradicated as quickly as possible. Food businesses will normally close to allow treatment to be carried out.

Evidence of the presence of rats or mice can be established without the sighting of a live animal. Rodents are likely to chew into food packaging, damage the structure of the business and nibble food. Their droppings will be easily visible throughout the premises but look closely at the wall/floor junctions and under work surfaces and equipment.

Eradicating these pests is not easy and owners of food business are therefore strongly advised to follow these instructions:

- Throw away any opened foods, as they may have become contaminated by rats or mice. Ensure that any undamaged foods are stored in easily cleanable, pest proof containers, off the floor.
- Remove all droppings from the floor and other surfaces so that rodent activity can be closely monitored. It is most effective to do this with a vacuum cleaner as using a brush can spread the droppings and they can get caught in the bristles.
- Thoroughly clean the premises from top to bottom i.e. walls, floors, ceilings and fixtures and fittings. This includes the dismantling of all catering machinery to remove all traces of grease and food debris. There must be nothing left for the rodents to eat.

As soon as these tasks are complete you will need to employ the services of a competent pest control contractor to provide a **course of treatment**. You can contact the Council's pest control department on 0161 770 4509, alternatively look in the Yellow Pages under "Pest and Vermin Control Services". You may wish to enquire whether the company is a member of the British Pest Control Association. We would expect the treatment to include the following:

Eradicating Rats and Mice in Food Premises (continued)

- Throughout the premises bait will be laid which the rodents need to eat.
Care - you must ensure that the traps are not disturbed during cleaning as they will be less effective if they are moved.
- The contractor will need to gain access to all parts of the premises and may need to remove skirting boards, fridges, freezers and other equipment to gain access to the right areas for laying bait.
Care – poison bait must be kept away from open food and drink, wash your hands immediately if you come into contact with it.
- The pest control contractor may also use traps and/or sticky boards, if the infestation is heavy.
- You will also be given advice about ‘proofing’ the building to prevent mice gaining access. This will include sealing holes in floors, walls and ceilings, fitting bristle strips to the bottom of doors and sealing holes around cables and pipes.

Remember - mice can fit into very small spaces. If a hole can fit a pen in it, then a mouse can fit through it.

It may take a few days to control the infestation but you can help the situation by allowing your pest control contractor ready access to all areas of the premises. In addition, you should contact your pest control contractor **immediately** if you have identified any signs of activity in a particular place i.e. droppings, chewed packaging, nibbled food (this indicates a local “hot spot” and the surrounding area requires immediate treatment).

Even when you believe the infestation is under control we would seriously recommend that you retain the services of the pest control contractor. Any surviving rats or mice can quickly re-infest the premises and therefore you will need to be vigilant.

When your contractor informs you that the infestation is under control then you should contact the Officer for further advice (e.g. with respect to reopening the business, if you have been closed during this period). However, please feel free to contact the Officer at any time if there are issues you do not understand or if you would like further advice.

Each day before opening for business the following tasks must be performed:

- All surfaces which come into contact with food or hands must be thoroughly cleaned. To do this effectively, we recommend that an antibacterial cleaner is used to sanitise these areas.
- All glasses, crockery, cutlery, catering utensils should be washed (preferably in a dishwasher).
- All catering equipment must be cleaned and sanitised.
- Your employees should be fully aware of the food safety hazards caused by the infestation and receive appropriate training. At all times they should practice good personal hygiene, which includes frequent hand washing.

Eradicating Rats and Mice in Food Premises (continued)

- At the end of the working day the premises should be thoroughly cleaned so that no food debris is left for the rodents to eat.

Finally, if the rat or mouse infestation re-establishes itself then you **must** contact the Officer immediately, for additional advice.

Contact

For further advice/information please contact:

Oldham Council, Food Safety, Chadderton Town Hall, Middleton Road, Chadderton,
Oldham OL9 6PP on Telephone 0161 770 2244 or email env.foodsafety@oldham.gov.uk