

How To Identify A Rat Nest



Rats are commonly known to cause damage property, spread infections, and contaminating food and animal feeds. They can also bring with them other parasites like ticks, lice and fleas. The [Roof rat](#) (*Rattus rattus*) and the [Norway rat](#) (*Rattus norvegicus*) are the most common rat species in the NZ. They breed and multiply very quickly, and if an action is not taken, they can potentially cause havoc. As such, it is advisable to act as soon as you see a sign in your home.

The rat is a nocturnal animal and thus active at night. For this reason, you are likely to only spot the signs of a rat infestation. This article focuses on some of the techniques that can help you identify early signs of rat infestation to protect the well-being and health of your family and your residence. A rat nest is among the signs that will tell you about a rat in your home.



Common Locations for Rat Nesting

Rodents characteristically make their nests in urban or suburban areas, so they have access to sufficient food supply, water, and shelter. The chances are that your house has all a rat needs. Preventing access to the rat's fundamental survival tools is vital to avert a rat infestation. Rodents normally get access to your house or building through holes and cracks in foundations or walls. They can also gain entry to your structure through floor drains, open doors and windows, and fan openings. Packages of merchandise that were previously infested can facilitate a rat to establish a permanent residence.



Nest Construction

Most often, rodents will construct their nests using the same type of materials. The nests are usually made from:

- Plant remains
- Human-made wreckage
- Cotton
- Twigs



Besides using the same types of materials repeatedly, rodents have the custom of constructing their nests in the same sites. Typically, an ideal venue for a nest inside your residence will be:

- Under porches
- In attics
- In boxed-in plumbing
- Between walls
- In crawlspaces

A rat is not confined inside your house or building; you will often find them outdoors. Among the locations you are likely to find rat nests include:

- Garbage dumps
- Ponds
- Tress
- Old Furniture
- Yard water
- Debris piles

The size of a rat nest varies depending on the number of occupants in it. For instance, a solitary rat will have a smaller nest than a rat that is nursing. An average-sized nest can fit inside a cereal bowl.

Evidence of a Rat Nest

In cases where you don't see a nest, there are those specific hints that will signify an infestation in your residence. The nocturnal creatures will often carry out their business between dusk and dawn in the absence of humans. You will likely see them in the daylight after they have already multiplied. Some of the things you should keep on top of your mind include:

1. Rat Droppings

These rodents will produce over 40 droppings in a single night which you are likely to find concentrated in one area. Rat droppings look like a large rice grain. The droppings of the brown rat are dark in color with elongated spindle shape and a length of about 9mm to 14mm.

2. Scratching Noises

A Roof rat, also called black rat, is known to be an agile climber and can gain entry under the building floors or into loft spaces. Their presence can be suggested by the scratching noise they make at night. In contrast, brown rats are less skilled climbers and can be heard scurrying under the floorboards, sheds, and decking. The rodents usually make a grinding noise called bruxing, which they make with their teeth. The cracking sound can help you identify them easily.

3. Footprints

In rarely-used buildings, they will often leave trails and footprints or tracks which can be identified. The tracks can be easily seen using an intense flashlight. You can tell if there is an active infestation by sprinkling some fine flour along a stretch around the prints and come the following day to check for fresh tracks.

4. Burrows

The brown rat usually is associated with excavating and digging extensive and deep burrows for nesting, storage of food, and shelter. Their holes are present in the garage, garden sheds, under decking or in the compost heaps.

5. Nests

You are likely to find a rat nest in a warm and well-hidden spot, which is constructed using materials that shredded such as fabrics and newspapers. The nest will also be situated near a source of food to feed young rats inside.

6. Causing Damages

The teeth of a rat grow continuously throughout their lives. As such, they maintain and trim them by gnawing on plastic and wooden materials. They can also start a fire by chewing through electrical wires. They even tear open food, and some teeth marks can be noticed on ripped packaging.

7. Rub Marks

Rodents generally have a poor vision, and so they will make use of already made routes along walls and skirting boards. Their bodies sometimes have dirt and grease which leave dark marks and stains on the surfaces and items they keep brushing against. The smears may at times be misleading, as the permanent marks remain for a long time and can be confused with an active infestation.

Getting Rid of Rat Nests

To avoid getting exposed to any potential hazard, you should take caution when removing the nests. Safety gear such as gloves and goggles should be a priority when dealing with nests. A respirator also will be necessary so that you don't breathe in the nest dust that can contain remains of rat droppings. The rat droppings can potentially carry bio-hazardous disease-causing organisms. Getting rid of rat nests is one step of the whole process. You will also need to block their points of entry to your house.

Using Traps

One of the cheap and straightforward ways of eradicating rodents is by using traps. There are some effective bait traps with a [self-resetting CO2-powered shot](#) which kill a rodent instantly after triggering a spring-loaded striker. The traps require no toxins or electricity, are certified humane and are safe around pets. All you need to do is set up the trap, and it will get the job done. You should set your trap in areas where you have identified signs such as the hidden areas, near food sources, and in the basements.

Roof rats and Norway rats have different characteristics, and the traps should, therefore, be set differently. For a Roof rat, place the traps in high spots and upper levels of your residence. The Norway rat is hardly a climber and as such your traps should be set in dark corners and along walls in hidden areas.

Plants and herbs such as Marigolds, garlic, rosemary, black pepper, onions, daffodils, and black pepper are known to keep the rodents away. There are also the rodent-attracting plants that you should probably avoid putting in your garden. Rodents love feasting on grains, nuts, seeds, berries as well as leafy garden vegetables and fruits.

Rodent-Attracting Plants to Avoid Putting in Your Garden



Planting some greenery is a great way to combat those COVID-19 blues that come from self-quarantine. Social distancing is necessary to stay safe, but you don't have to stay inside in beautiful weather. In fact, gardening is becoming more popular now, as families plan their summer activities. And one of the best things about summer is plucking beans, peppers, corn, and tomatoes right from the garden. Fresh veggies at their finest!

Experienced gardeners know dealing with mice, bugs, and invasive weeds goes with the territory. Tell-“tail” signs will let you know if there are mice and other critters living within or near the garden. If you find nesting areas under trash, drainpipes, sheds, woodpiles, and mulch, chances are the critters are having a field day in your garden. Mice and rats can cause a lot of damage beyond eating all your fruits and vegetables.



Field mice eat nuts, berries, seeds, and small insects. They also enjoy leafy garden vegetables and houseplants — if there's nothing more palatable on the menu. To keep mice out of the garden, do not plant corn or sunflowers. They love the kernels. Grass seed and grains are also favourite snacks for mice and rats. These rodents typically eat seeds from the ground without disturbing the soil.

Rats might eat vegetables and fruits in a garden, but only if there's nothing else available. They eventually move on to areas with meats, grains, oils, and other fats. (Keep the garbage can lid tightly closed!)



If there's no corn, grain or seed to munch on, rodents will visit the garden to feed on:

Cabbage
Carrots
Cauliflower
Leeks
Peas
Turnips
Potatoes
Zucchini
Tulips

These, along with green beans, are plants to avoid putting in your garden if you don't want to attract mice.