

QUICK FACTS

RATS



Norway rat, *Rattus norvegicus*



Roof rat, *Rattus rattus*

Rats are one of the most destructive invasive species in North America. They cause damage to agriculture, properties, ecosystems, and have the potential to transfer disease to humans.

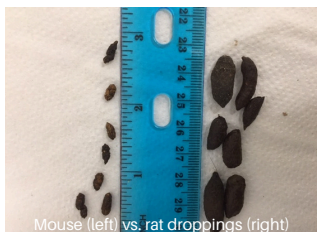
RAT ON RATS!

Here's how you can help prevent the spread of rats:

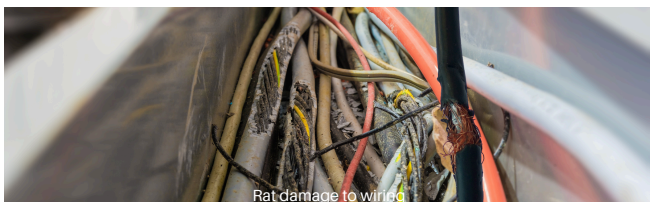
1. **Rat!** If you see rats or signs of their activity, take a photo if you can and report it to rats@gov.ab.ca, 310-FARM, your local municipality, or use the free EDDMapS app.
2. **Know the law!** In Alberta, all rats of the genus *Rattus* are listed as an agricultural pest under the Agricultural Pests Act. This means land owners and local government shall work to prevent infestations, and control or destroy invasive rats in the province. The Alberta Rat Control Program has prevented the establishment of rats for over 70 years.
3. **Recognize a rat!** Many rodents are often misidentified for rats. Norway rats and roof rats (reportable species) are larger in size than the mouse, vole, pocket gopher, bushy-tailed wood rats, Richardson ground squirrel, however, smaller than a muskrat.



Rat burrow into grain bin



Mouse (left) vs. rat droppings (right)



Rat damage to wiring

RAT QUICK FACTS:

- Rats are native to Asia and were introduced to Canada through cargo ships. Most often, they will hitch a ride through various forms of transport (boats, trailers, transport trucks, cars, etc.).
- Norway rats have coarse gray to brown hair. Tails are distinctly leathery, nearly hairless, cylindrical, and shorter than their thick bodies (up to 10 inches). Their small faces have blunt snouts, large teeth and small ears.
- Roof rats have smooth black to brown hair. Tails are scaly, cylindrical, and noticeably longer than their slim bodies (5-7 inches). Their faces have pointed noses, large eyes and ears.
- Rats can reproduce every 21-23 days and have litters with up to 12 young at a time. In one year, a female can have up to 15,000 offspring.
- Common signs of rats include: droppings, gnaw or chew marks, burrows or nests, rub marks along walls, and strange noises from scurrying in walls, especially active during dusk or night.
- Rats can host over 35 different diseases that can be transmitted to humans. From the bubonic plague to typhus and hantavirus, diseases can be transmitted directly from exposure to rat-infected feces, urine or bites and indirectly through vectors such as fleas, ticks or mites.
- Rats can impact agriculture by contaminating crops and damage infrastructure through gnawing, which can cause electrical fires. The cost of damage in the US is estimated at over \$19 billion annually.
- Control of rats can be difficult. The most effective method is to eliminate the entire group simultaneously using trained personnel and then rat-proof the area to prevent further infestations.
- Rats are not established in Alberta. The province remains the largest rat-free jurisdiction in the world.



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