



'Rat on Rats!'

Virtual Forum





Rats are one of the most destructive invasive species in North America. Since their introduction into Canada, rats have spread all over, causing damage to cropland, properties, ecosystems and public health through disease transfer. Alberta has remained rat-free for over 70 years, through the Rat Control Program, and is considered one of the most successful pest management initiatives in the world.

We hope you enjoy the Alberta Invasive Species Council's (AISC) first virtual forum on rats! This webinar delves into the fascinating history of how Alberta achieved and continues to uphold its rat-free status, exploring the coordinated efforts that have kept this invasive species at bay. Attendees will gain insight into the origins of Alberta's Rat Control Program, its evolution, and the critical role that the public plays in reporting potential sightings through the new Rat on Rats! campaign.

Thank you for joining us virtually!



Contact Us



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'Rat on Rats!' Campaign



Alberta holds a unique status as the world's largest rat-free jurisdiction—a distinction that has been carefully maintained for over 70 years.

Increasing awareness of the issue of rats is critical to the success of the Alberta Rat Control Program. Most people in Alberta have never been in contact with rats and do not know what they look like or how to control them. The government's initial response was to educate the public on the impacts of rats, how to identify them, and the province's response through the Rat Control Program. The infamous '[You Can't Ignore the Rat](#)' posters and other resources were widely distributed in the 1960s. While Alberta has maintained a rat-free status for decades, increased global trade, human movement, and climate change heighten the risk of rat introduction and infestation. The economic impact of a rat infestation can be devastating to farmers, businesses, and municipalities.

To raise awareness, the AISC, in partnership with Alberta Agriculture and Irrigation, have developed the '[Rat on Rats!](#)' campaign to encourage the public to report observations of rats. The AISC is grateful to the Sustainable Canadian Agricultural Partnership funding, which has allowed us to create and promote the 'Rat on Rats!' Campaign to raise awareness of this issue in Alberta.

We are asking for your help to report observations of rats and damage they may have caused using the free [EDDMapS](#) app, emailing rats@gov.ab.ca, calling 310-FARM, or contacting your local municipality. More resources can be found by accessing the [Rat on Rats! Quick Facts Card](#) or the [Norway Rat Fact Sheet](#).

Forum Details

November 5, 2024

Welcome and announcements – 11:00AM to 11:05AM

Introduction of Rat on Rats! Campaign (recording) – 11:05AM to 11:10AM

The Honourable RJ Sigurdson, Minister of Agriculture and Irrigation

History of the Rat Control Program – 11:05AM to 11:20AM

Ted Stenson, Writer and Filmmaker

Ted is a writer and filmmaker based in Calgary, Alberta. His first feature film “EVENTS TRANSPIRING BEFORE, DURING, AND AFTER A HIGH SCHOOL BASKETBALL GAME” premiered at the Vancouver International Film Festival in 2020 and went on to play at over 15 festivals. “LIVING WITHOUT MENACE”, his documentary about the Alberta Rat Patrol was released on CBC in 2022.



Ted will discuss the history of the Alberta Rat Control Program, why it took rats so long to reach the Alberta-Saskatchewan border after colonization, Alberta’s initial reactions to the 1950s invasions, and how the political/social environment of the 1950s helped Alberta so successfully defend itself against rat infestations.

Introduction of the Rat on Rats! Campaign and Current Updates – 11:20AM to 11:35PM

Karen Wickerson, Rat and Pest Specialist, Alberta Agriculture and Irrigation

Karen has worked for the Government of Alberta for 12 years. First as a post mortem technologist in the Airdrie Agriculture Pathology Lab for 7 years, and then as the Rat and Pest Specialist for the province for the past 4 years. Karen is a Registered Veterinary Technologist having worked in a rural mixed animal veterinary clinic for first 7 years of her veterinary career. When she graduated from the Animal Health Technology program at Olds College, she never thought her love of working with animals would lead to her running the rat control program for the province!



The presentation today will cover an update on the current Rat Control Program and why Alberta has been successful at preventing rats from establishing in the province.

Boots on the Ground: Rat Inspections and Infestations in Alberta – 11:35AM to 11:50AM

Lisa Sulz, Agricultural Supervisor, Cypress County

Lisa is the Agricultural Supervisor at Cypress County, known for her leadership in agricultural management and pest control, including invasive plants and rats. As a Pest Control Officer (PCO) in her role, she was actively involved in addressing the rat infestation in Medicine Hat in 2014, working to mitigate the spread and impact of the pests in the area.

Cypress County is one of 7 municipalities within the Alberta Rat Control Zone (RCZ). This presentation will highlight the work done by a PCO within the RCZ during an inspection, common signs to look for and identification of the Norway rat.



Georgia Resident Perspective – 11:50AM to 12:00PM

Chuck Barger, Director for Invasive Species & Ecosystem Health, University of Georgia

Chuck is the Director of the Center for Invasive Species & Ecosystem Health at the University of Georgia. Chuck has been with UGA for 25 years, during which time his work has focused on invasive species and information technology. He is the former Chair of the National Invasive Species Advisory Council and former President of the NAISMA. Chuck has been an invited speaker at over 350 regional and national conferences.

For his day job, Chuck spends most of his time talking about invasive species and how and why you should map them. However, at night and on the weekends, Chuck has dealt with infestations of mice and rats and can provide some personal insight into how difficult it is to remove them.



--- 10 MINUTE PANEL DISCUSSION ---

Closing remarks – 12:10PM to 12:15PM

