

# Proofing Your Property Against Rats and Mice

Rats and Mice are rodents (from the Greek word meaning to gnaw). Of the 5,000 species of mammal in the world, around 2,000 are rodents. Damage and disease caused by rodents worldwide costs dearly both in property damage and healthcare. By preventing rodent access to your premises, you can drastically reduce the probability of expense and illness. There are a few simple steps you can take to adequately proof your building in order to reduce the probability of rodent ingress. These are relatively inexpensive and simple to carry out. Remember, when dealing with rodent proofing, consider every possible way they can enter your premises.

## Mice

Practically, there is no way to completely exclude mice from your property. Most infestations of mice occur in the kitchen, under sinks, behind washing machines etc. Mice can squeeze through a gap as small as 10mm (the diameter of a pencil) and once inside need no invitation to stay. Proofing recommendations are also suitable for other rooms.



Firstly, check around external walls where pipes etc. come into the building and areas where brickwork, steps and doorways exist. If there are any gaps or holes they can be sealed by pushing some wire wool into the gap and either cementing over or using commercially available expanding foam. Also check for broken - and damaged air bricks. Ideally these should be replaced. Do not block them up fully as ventilation of the property would be impaired.

Remember, if you live in a semi-detached or terraced house, the entry point into the block may not be on your property. It may prove beneficial to talk to your neighbours and ask if they have had any problems. Some people may not feel happy talking about their problem but there should be no social stigma attached to having mice. It is not an indication of a dirty or badly kept house - everyone will have an infestation at some time or other, from terraced cottages to stately homes and the pest control service in West Lothian will deal with around 500 calls every year!

Where there is a garage or other outbuilding attached to the house, don't forget to check where services pass through the adjoining wall and seal as above.

Gaps under doors, down to 5mm can be sealed effectively with nylon bristle-strip, which is commercially available. Your Pest Control Officer can advise and fit these if required.

Access points may be below ground level so a thorough check of the foundations is recommended and any gaps or holes sealed.

Look around the exterior of the house. Is there anything that would give mice cover up to the walls (remember they don't like to be in the open if they can help it).

After all this you may well get mice again, however these steps should help reduce the probability of re-infestation in the future but, if you suspect that you have problems again, don't hesitate. Contact us as soon as you can and we will be only too happy to help.

## Rats

Most of the points raised about mice are suitable for rats. The Brown or Common rat is the only species found in West Lothian and tends to be a ground dweller however, this is not always the case as they are found commonly in attics (around 200 calls per annum are received by the pest control service).



Because of their size, the damage that these intruders can cause is much worse than a colony of mice. At the tip of their incisor (front) teeth they can exert a force of 5,000 - 12,500 pounds per square inch. This is strong enough to chew through wood, soft metal, brick and stone. But, again it is important to try and discourage rats from getting into the house.

Rats, like mice, can squeeze through impossibly small gaps (anything down to the size of a 10p coin) and should never be underestimated as to

their versatility and persistence when trying to enter a building.

All the check points noted under the mouse section should be taken into consideration. They can climb but require help, so make sure that there are no nearby trees or bushes which would allow them to enter above ground level. Climbing plants such as clematis or ivy are ideal 'ladders' for rats to get above ground level.

There may be occasions where, with a constantly recurring infestation, no matter how hard you try you cannot find any entry point. Then you must consider the possibility of rats entering your premises from below ground level.

The brown rat is an expert burrower and is capable of digging into extremely hard soil in an effort to make a nest or get round an obstacle. Check the perimeter of the building, the burrows are about 2 inches in diameter, travel into the ground at an angle and are usually tight up against the building. This area would then require to be dug and any gaps in the foundations repaired.

Lastly if all these access points are covered and there has been a long history of rat problems in your building, they may be entering via a break in the sewerage system and this will need to be repaired as soon as possible.

Even if all methods of proofing are carried out, rodents will find varied ways of getting into your home or business and nothing you do will guarantee that you won't get a problem in the future. You may leave the door open to go into the garden, or leave a window open for ventilation and these also provide ideal entry points when your back is turned. Contact the pest control service and we will deal with your problem, but without proofing your property is still at risk and the chance of re-infestation is high.

If you require a service to deal with rats or mice at your property do not hesitate to call us on 01506 280000 and we will be pleased to help, even if you need some advice, we are here to help.



West Lothian  
Council