

Introduced Rats

Introduced rat species have amazing abilities to detect humans trying to harm them. Rats by nature have survived by being suspicious of new objects like traps or baits.



Brown Rat (*Rattus norvegicus*)

The Brown Rat is very common in Sydney, probably arriving with the First Fleet. It can be an aggressive animal. Unlike the Black Rat which will cower if caught, this rat will stand its ground, squealing loudly and can ferociously attack.

They do well living on human sewerage and rubbish. They can cause damage to gardens and will eat shellfish, bird eggs, seeds and some insects. Given the opportunity, they are a successful predator of small mammals and birds.

It is a prolific breeder capable of producing 150 young per year. The Brown Rat is rarely seen above ground level, making a maze or burrow under ground or living in basements, under houses or in sewers.



Black Rat (*Rattus rattus*)

The Black Rat is not usually black in colour as the name suggests but is a grey-brown. It is a highly adaptable species that arrived in Australia with European settlement. It lives close to human habitation but likes wetter areas near creeks, drains and streams. The Black Rat will live in roofs, walls, trees, sheds, machinery and dark corners. It eats almost anything we or our animals will eat. It builds nests out of rubbish and plastics such as paper, insulation and other debris. They are very good climbers and swimmers, so they can access most areas. The Black Rat climbs trees and eats small birds or eggs out of their nests, as well as fruit and vegetables.

They often cause damage by gnawing pipes, telephone cords and hoses. They are unhygienic and the carrier of disease. This Rat can have up to 60 young in a year and at three months, are sexually mature.

The Black Rat is commonly sighted in the Rockdale area by day or night. Common sightings are around most of our waterways and beach areas. This is the rat seen by most people. Most people wrongly call them Water Rats; nothing could be further from the truth.



Unwanted Visitors?



For more information on COUNCIL'S RODENT CONTROL PROGRAMME please contact Council's Waste Education Officer on 9562 1533.

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Have you had a rat visit your home ?

If you did, it was most probably an introduced rat of which there are two species. Both are pests. But not all rats are bad. We have a small, significant group of native rats which Council is doing its best to protect.

What does Council intend to do?

Council understand rats have a bad reputation. None of the native rodents deserve this reputation. We want our residents to understand the difference between native and non-native rats.

As another action, Council will embark on trapping rats in bushland areas. Baiting is not an option as we may destroy native animals. Native rats will be set free and introduced rats will be humanely euthanised.

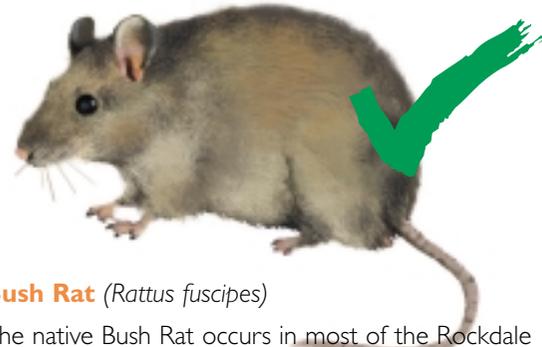
What Can I do to keep rats out of my yard/house?

To control the impact of introduced rodents, the simplest method is to reduce or destroy their habitat and food source. Early action is important. Around your home, traps and rat baits can be effective (see Fact Sheet on Rat Eradication At Home). Rats only need a 12mm hole to gain entry into your home.

Rats found in the Rockdale area...

Native Rats

All native rats are protected by the NSW *National Parks and Wildlife Act 1974*. Most of the habitats of the native rat in the Rockdale Local Government Area have been heavily altered or destroyed. However, enough remnant vegetation still exists in our wildlife corridors and wetlands to sustain a small but valuable colony of native rats. Indiscriminate baiting in bushlands can kill these animals.



Bush Rat (*Rattus fuscipes*)

The native Bush Rat occurs in most of the Rockdale bushland areas. It likes to live near streams, preferring areas with thick groundcover. This makes most of our wildlife corridors an ideal home for them. Although the Bush Rat is common in our area, it is rarely seen. This is because of its nocturnal lifestyle. Our Bush Rats, being extremely shy, will never enter your house. This rat almost entirely lives on insects, but when food is short, it will eat various fungi such as mushrooms.

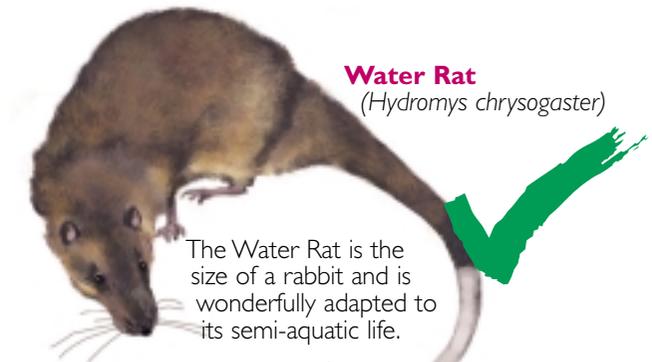
If you are living in a bushland area, with a creek nearby, you may be lucky enough to have one of these timid creatures in your area. The Bush Rat can sometimes be mistaken for the Black Rat or Brown Rat. The differences are that the Black Rat has a tail longer than its body and the Brown Rat has smaller ears and a thicker tail.

Swamp Rat
(*Rattus lutreolus*)



Also known as the Velvet-Furred Rat, this species is quite common, although no sightings were made in Council's 2003 rodent survey. But it is possible that it lives in the area because the Swamp Rat often co-exists with the Bush Rat. The Swamp Rat occurs in a variety of habitats ranging from reeds to grasslands and coastal heath. It forms extensive systems of runways beneath dense vegetation.

Its main diet is comprised of grasses and reeds, although insects are an occasional delicacy. They can be seen during the day in densely grassed areas. It is unlikely that a Swamp Rat would enter a typical suburban backyard.



Water Rat
(*Hydromys chrysogaster*)

The Water Rat is the size of a rabbit and is wonderfully adapted to its semi-aquatic life.

It has large, webbed back feet and water-repellent fur. Like the platypus, it is highly specialised for an aquatic environment. Their beautiful thick fur has a golden-orange base, with dark brown tips. Because of this they were hunted for their skins during the 1930s and 40s. Following a huge decrease in their numbers, they became a protected species. The white tipped tail of the Water Rat is large and bushy and used as a rudder.

Although primarily nocturnal, this delightful animal may be seen during the dusk diving for food, surfacing only temporarily for air. The Water Rat is most active around sunset and may forage during the day. Unlike most rodents, the Water Rat is a predator, its diet consisting mainly of aquatic insects, fish and crustaceans. It can be recognised by its small round ears. This rat will not enter a suburban backyard unless it contains a natural broad water course.