



**Allegheny County Health Department  
Division of Housing & Community Environment**



Dear Resident,

If you have rats or have received a notice from your municipality or the County Health Department that rats were found on your property, *this information is for you.*

**How to Comply with a Pre-inspection Notice or a Violation Notice:**

1. Controlling rats is not hard and there are plenty of excellent “do it yourself” rat control products in local hardware stores. If you carefully follow the directions for use on the product, the rats will be gone within a month. Either do it yourself or hire a commercial pest control company to do it for you. Licensed pest control applicators are able to use more types of pesticide, some of which are restricted-use. A good way to start is to follow the steps outlined in the Health Department’s pamphlet, *“Residents Guide to Rodent Control”*.
2. Rats are a community-wide problem. Share the *Residents Guide* with your neighbors.
3. The Allegheny County Health Department is often called upon to inspect private and public properties for rats. A property will fail an inspection if any of the following signs are found:
  - Live rats
  - Rat droppings
  - Burrows (places where rats live)
  - Gnaw marks from rats’ teeth
  - Tracks or runways, such as rub marks or flattened foot paths outside burrows
  - Excessive garbage or clutter that gives rats food and a place to hide

Property owners who fail an inspection will receive a Violation Notice and a copy of the inspection report in the mail. Owners will have two weeks (14 days) to correct the problem. If the property fails a second inspection, the owner will receive a second Notice of Violation. This may result in a required appearance in Magistrate’s court and fines. Please know that once a rat problem is verified on your property, **the Health Department’s Housing & Community Environment Code (Article 6) insists that “extermination is the responsibility of the property owner.”**

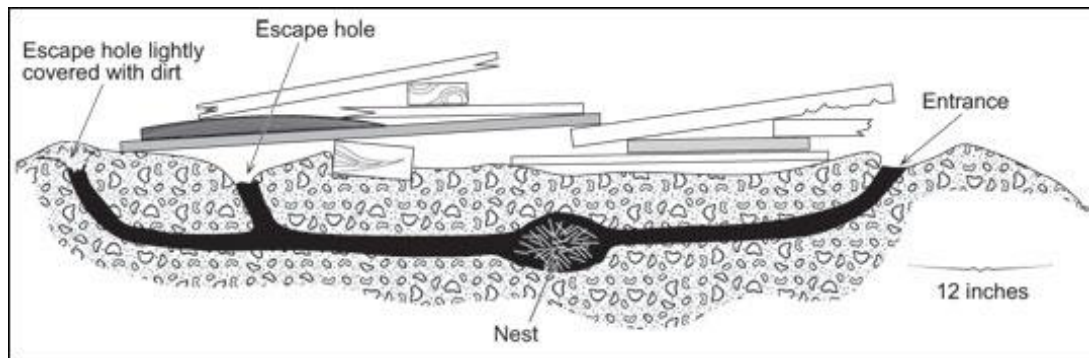
**Using Rodenticide to Control Rats:**

All formulations of rat bait that are sold in hardware stores are safe and effective at killing rats. If you live in your own home without tenants, state law allows you to purchase and place rodent bait yourself. However, owners of commercial property and rental properties with more than 3 units must hire a professional pest control company to service rodent and insect problems. Unless the landlord or a maintenance person is a certified pesticide applicator, it is against state law for them to use pesticide in rental property.

**“Do it Yourself” Rat Control with Rodenticide:**

- Always read and follow the manufacturer’s label, using the smallest but effective amount of bait.
- Use disposable gloves when handling bait, and wash your hands afterwards.
- Use secured bait chunks (called “bait blocks”) inside tamper-resistant bait stations. Secure or anchor bait stations to the ground or fence with stakes & wire.

- Place bait stations on the same path as rats normally travel—often along building walls and fence lines. Since rats always travel on the same path, they're more likely to eat from stations along it.
- **Burrow Baiting:** A typical rat burrow is 2.5 to 3 inches in diameter, 6 to 8 feet in length, and only 6 to 8 inches deep. Fresh dirt "kick-out" can usually be seen at the entrance. Placing rat bait directly into the burrow is a safe and effective delivery method. However, bagged bait should not be used in burrows. Rats may push the bag out of the burrow where children, pets or wildlife can get to them. Instead, place small amounts of loose or pellet sized bait into burrows with a long handled spoon or funnel. This will ensure that the bait is placed deep into the burrow where rats are more likely to accept it.



Provide a continuous supply of bait until feeding stops. Collect and dispose of any dead rodents found during the course of a rat control program. You can pick them up using a sturdy plastic bag inverted in your hand. Then, seal them in the bag and dispose of them with household garbage or bury them in a location where pets or scavengers will not easily dig them up. Be sure to remove and properly dispose of all uneaten bait at the end of a control program.

#### **Other Rat Control Methods:**

Rat traps take a lot of time & effort to achieve any measure of success. Once rats get inside of a home, traps help reduce the chance of a bad odor caused by a poisoned rat that has died in an inaccessible location. Frightening devices such as high frequency and ultrasonic sounds are generally ineffective for controlling rats in homes and gardens. Ultrasound has not been shown to drive established rodents out of buildings or cause above-normal mortality in their populations, therefore cannot be recommended as a solution to rodent problems.

Although house cats, some dogs, and other predators may kill rats, they do not effectively control a rat population under most circumstances. Rather, many rat problems around homes can be related to the keeping of pets. Rats are often found living in very close association with dogs and cats, and frequently live beneath a doghouse, feeding on the dog's food when it is absent or asleep.

Rats have an initial aversion to some odors and tastes, but no repellents have ever been found to solve a rat problem for more than for a few days. ***As long as the environmental conditions that initially attracted and bred the rats are eliminated (garbage, pet food/waste, etc.), rat control with a pesticide is usually the most permanent and cost-effective method.***

An exhaustive review of current rat control methods and materials can be found at the UC Davis link. <http://www.ipm.ucdavis.edu/PMG/PESTNOTES/pn74106.html>