

Control of Sewer Rats (Continued)

Paraffin block baits come in a variety of sizes and contain a natural flavor that attracts the rats to the poison. The baits are attached to the sewers using a secured tie wire. Under most conditions a bait block attached to a manhole cover lasts about a week. After an inspection additional blocks may be added as needed.

In sanitary sewers, bait blocks should be placed on the manhole benching. The baits are secured to the bottom step of a manhole



Figure 4. Bait blocks secured with a non-corrosive wire.

ladder using a minimum amount of wire. When there is no benching, a board may be placed across the sewer on opposite steps. Bait blocks are placed on the board and secured to the board or the ladder.

In a sanitary storm sewer, bait blocks may be suspended from the street grating. Wire secures the blocks to the grate allowing the blocks to hang just a few inches above the normal water level. Where possible, blocks should rest against the side of the sewer.

What Municipal Governments Can Do

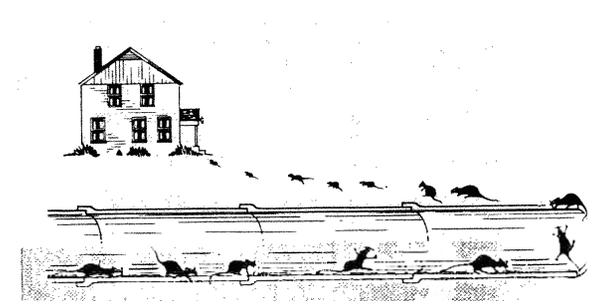
City and County municipal governments are able to treat sewers that are infested by rats. As long as treatment is limited to municipal property (the sewer system), a state pesticide certification is not required. If rats are entering a home/property via the sewer system, a plumber can evaluate the condition of the house drain or lateral line with a sewer camera. Lines that are broken, obstructed by tree roots and subject to clogging or rat infestation may need to be replaced between the house and the street.

For more information on sewer rat control, call the Allegheny County Health Department's Housing & Community Environment Division at 412-350-4046.

Original Source: J. T. Eaton Co. 1972
1393 E. Highland Road, Twinsburg, OH 44087
800-321-3421 jteaton.com



Allegheny County Health Department



How Rats Enter Homes from Sewers

Information on identifying and controlling a sewer rat problem

Some Basic Facts

The problem of rats in sewers is an almost universal one.

Rats thrive in these subterranean passages because the environment provides them with their most important requirements: shelter and food.

The shelter of sewers is ideal for rats. Compared to above-ground areas, sewers are warmer in cold weather and cooler in hot weather. In addition, few humans or other animals are around to bother them and food is plentiful, especially with garbage disposal systems dumping bite-sized food into the sewer system.

Rats are excellent swimmers as well. Except during floods, life in the sewer is no problem for them.

Rats Don't Stay in Sewers

If rats would stay underground, they would be of little menace to anyone except sewer workers performing maintenance. Many municipalities with a large rat population have found that rats are born and bred in the sewers.

In these labyrinths, rats multiply so quickly, in fact, that they expand beyond the crowded conditions of the sewer and come above ground in search of food and shelter. Rats also leave the sewers during flash floods, sewer construction projects and other conditions where there is an interruption in the food supply. They seek shelter in private homes, garages and sheds.

Rats Easily Get to the Surface

Rats have no problem getting to the surface and finding their way into homes. They find breaks in brick and terra cotta sewer pipes (i.e., house drains or lateral lines) and tunnel to the surface. These breaks occur due to age, settling, wear and tear, tree roots breaking through, or during excavation. Rats can burrow up through as much as eight feet of solid ground (Figure 1).

Once they get to the surface, rats find food under fruit trees, in gardens, flower beds, pet kennels and our homes. Once near the foundation, rats easily take advantage of dirt floors and any holes in concrete floors and stone walls. They can crawl up lateral house drains and enter homes through floor drains, roof drains, sewer vents and even toilet bowls (Figures 2 and 3).

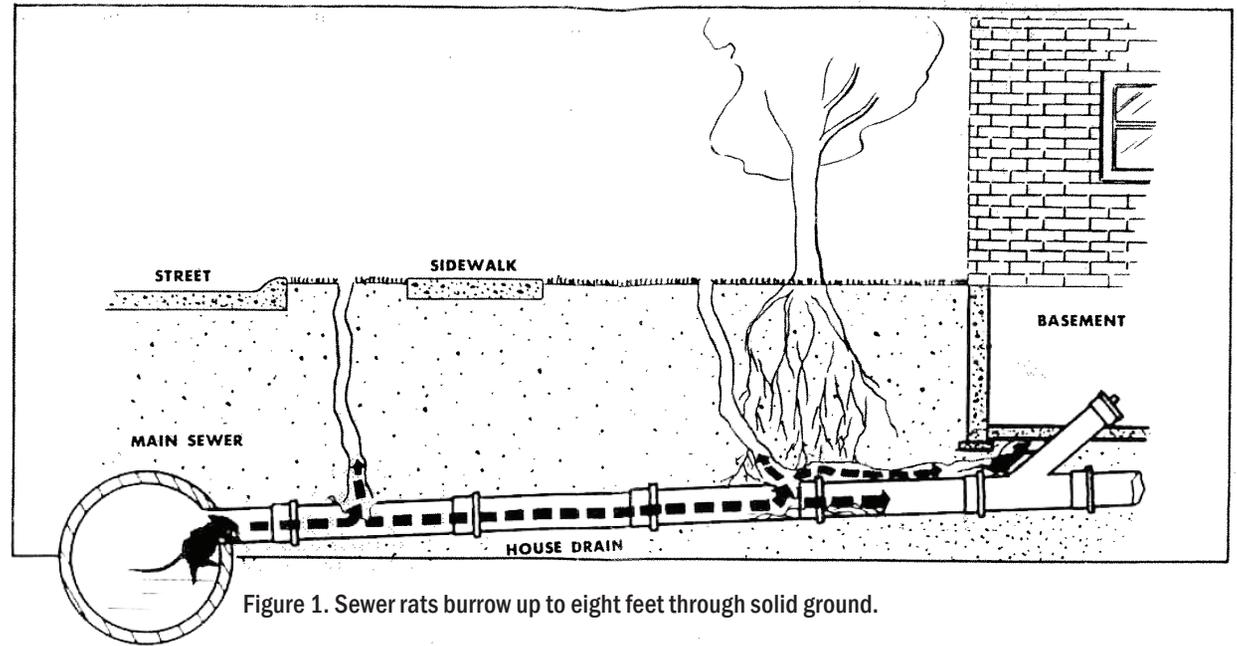


Figure 1. Sewer rats burrow up to eight feet through solid ground.

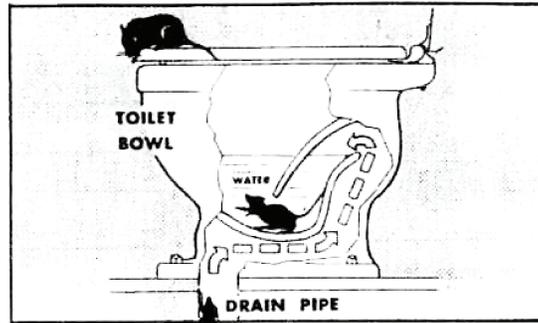


Figure 2. Rats can enter homes through toilet bowls.

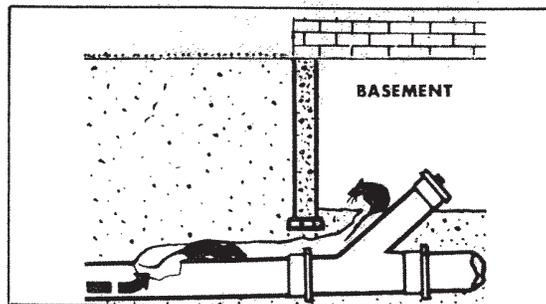


Figure 3. Rats get through cracks in concrete floors.

Control of Sewer Rats

Despite studying rats in sewers, little effort is used on a regular basis to control them. Municipal governments only get involved when sewer lines are being replaced or when there is specific evidence of rats in the sewer. For example, burrow holes between the street and sidewalk (Figure 1), holes around catch basins and man holes, or actual evidence of rats entering the basement via floor drains and fixtures.

One answer that has proven effective over the years is the use of pesticide bait mixtures molded into paraffin blocks. The blocks are mold and mildew resistant, convenient to handle, easily placed in the sewer, require no special containers and are large enough to reduce the cost of frequent inspections and replenishment. The anti-coagulant rodenticide that is used in the bait is safe to handle without polluting the water supply. It is also easy to secure and anchor in the sewer.