



CONTROLLING RATS



City of
Evanston™

Responsibilities

It takes a community-wide effort to manage the rodent population.

What Does the Evanston Health and Human Services Department Do?

Working with residents, the Evanston Health and Human Services Department:

- Handles **311** service requests
- Inspects and baits alleys and properties for rodents
- Performs and contracts baiting and exterior treatment (FREE for residential properties)

When you contact 311, the City will ask you to complete a “Release of Liability” allowing staff to inspect and treat the area. The form is available at cityofevanston.org/pestcontrol

What’s Your Responsibility?

- Report rats. Call or text **847-448-4311**
- Don’t give them a home. Keep food and garbage in tightly sealed containers, control vegetation, and close openings in garage walls and doors
- Share this information. Tell neighbors, tenants and landlords
- Team up. Work with your neighbors to clean up your alley and shared spaces

Follow the steps listed on the following pages to help eliminate the conditions that encourage rats.



How to Control Rats

Step One: Look for Evidence

The following signs may indicate the presence of rats.



Nests or burrows

Most rats live in nests or burrows. Burrows are holes in dirt or concrete approximately 1–4 inches wide, with smooth edges. Burrows can be found under bushes and plants, and will often have an entrance and exit hole.



Droppings

Rat droppings are often found close to trash bags or garbage cans. Common rat droppings are $\frac{1}{2}$ – $\frac{3}{4}$ inch long, with blunt ends, and are found in small groups.



Holes and gnaw marks

Rats can squeeze through holes as little as half an inch wide, and may gnaw or chew through wood fixtures and plastic garbage cans.



Rub marks

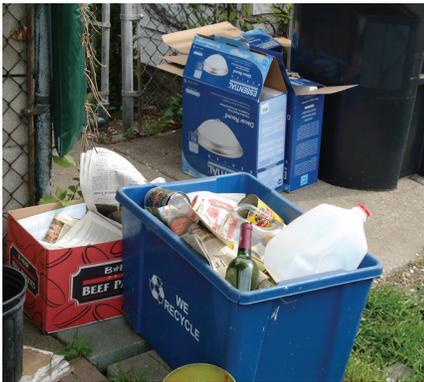
Check walls and grass for signs of runways. Rats run along the same path many times a day, and prefer to run along walls. This leaves dark, greasy track marks along the walls and worn down paths in grass.



How to Control Rats

Step Two: Clean Up

Managing the rodent population is a community effort. There are several steps you and your neighbors can take to help prevent rats from moving onto your property, and push out those that may already be there.



Get rid of clutter

Clutter gives rats many places to hide, sleep, nest and reproduce without being seen or disturbed. Remove (and recycle) piles of newspapers, paper bags, cardboard and bottles that may be on your property, and clean out your basement and yard. Rats love basements and garages because they offer many hiding spaces. If you do use these areas for storage, store items away from walls and off the ground, if possible. Remember that rats can easily gnaw through cardboard boxes.



Control weeds, shrubs and bushes

Rats often make their burrows underneath bushes and plants, where they are protected from the elements and predators. If you see rats or rat burrows on your property, you may need to do a little yard clean-up. Remove any weeds or trash, and aim to keep 6 inches of bare ground around the foundation of your building. Avoid tall grass, bushes and shrubs growing near the building. Do not plant too densely—make sure you leave a little space between plants. If you do spot burrows, remove any plants around them (such as ivy) and trim underneath shrubs to prevent further burrowing.

Wash away droppings and track marks

Rats communicate and attract each other through their urine and droppings. By sweeping up droppings and cleaning up track marks, you help prevent this communication and encourage rats to move away. Wash areas with water and a mild bleach solution (1 part bleach, 10 parts water). Make sure you work with your neighbors to clean up, so rats don't simply move from one place to another.



How to Control Rats

Step Three: Eliminate Sources of Food

Rats only need one ounce of food and half an ounce of water each day. Don't let your garbage become their next meal! Rats are quick to seek sustenance in garbage cans, and will drink from any source of standing water they can find.



Seal and manage your garbage

Bring garbage cans and bags to the curb as close to pick-up time as possible. Leaving them out overnight invites rats. Use City-approved garbage cans with tight-fitting lids, and make sure you have enough cans to hold your trash between pick-ups. Landlords can help by insisting that tenants place their garbage inside the cans, and not next to them. To request an extra garbage can or to replace a damaged one, call/text **847-448-4311**.



Keep food away

Keep all food in tightly sealed containers. When throwing out food, make sure that it's properly wrapped and not easily accessible. Do not put food out for stray animals, and remove any bird feeders, if you have them. Birdseed is an instant supply of food for rats, and birdbaths are a source of water. Other sources of standing water include children's toys, pet bowls, outdoor plants with saucers, gutters, pipes and trashcan lids. These serve as convenient water supplies for rats and should be emptied regularly.



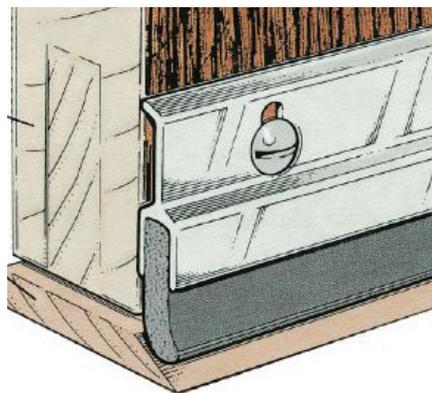
How to Control Rats

Step Four: Shut Them Out

Rats chew holes into buildings, and can squeeze through cracks and holes as small as half an inch wide. To keep rodents out, seal all holes and cracks in foundations, walls, floors, underneath doors, and around windows. Most repairs can be completed by maintenance staff, superintendents, repair workers or pest control professionals.

Seal cracks and small holes

Cracks and small holes can be sealed with caulk or roofing cement, which is durable and easily applied with a caulking gun. Close gaps under doors with rodent-resistant metal door sweeps like the one pictured to the right¹. Metal kick plates can also be installed at the bottom of doors to stop rats from gnawing through. Close window gaps with metal flashing, and put screens on vents, especially on lower floors.



Fill large gaps and holes

The best way to close large gaps and holes depends on the building material and the amount of space behind the hole. Use mortar or ready-mix cement to fill gaps and holes in cement and stone foundations. Cover large holes with metal lathe or screening, and then seal with mortar or cement. Cover floor drains and vents with heavy-duty metal screening, secured with masonry nails or cement. Seal pipes leading into walls with escutcheon plates (pipe collars). Check pipes regularly for leaks.

Close inactive burrows

An inactive burrow will often have leaves, cobwebs or other debris around the entrance. These should be closed so that rats cannot get back in. You can close burrows by filling them with soil and tamping them down with a shovel or by stepping on them. Close burrows in cracked or broken sidewalks with metal filler and cement.

¹Photo from <http://home.howstuffworks.com/home-improvement/repair/how-to-apply-weatherstripping10.htm>



How to Control Rats

Step Five: Baiting and Treatment

Rodent Baiting

Rodent bait can be an effective way to control rats, but applying these poisons is a job for professionals. The Evanston Health and Human Services Department performs and contracts baiting and exterior treatment for free for residential properties. If you live in your own home without tenants, the law does allow you to place rodent bait yourself. However, commercial and multi-unit property owners must hire a pest control company—it's against the law for them to place their own bait. It is also against the law to bait in alleys. If you spot rats in alleys around your property, please call/text **847-448-4311**.

The City of Evanston seeks to serve as a model to the public for the use of sustainable pest control practices. In 2010, Evanston created the Sustainable Pest Control and Pesticide Reduction Policy to reduce the use of pesticides in the city through the implementation of sustainable pest control practices on City-owned or -leased property.

If you do hire a pest control company, make sure it follows these guidelines:

- Always read and follow the manufacturer's label, and use the smallest effective amount of bait
- Use disposable gloves while handling bait and wash your hands afterwards
- Use secured bait chunks (called "bait blocks") inside tamper-resistant stations. Secure or anchor bait stations to the ground or fence with cement, caulk or 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 placed along it
- Use a funnel to place loose pellet bait into burrows. This will help ensure pellets are placed deep into the burrow, so rats can't push them out
- Bagged bait should not be used in burrows or bait stations. Rats can push or carry them out of burrows or stations, where children, pets or wildlife can get to them
- Store and place bait stations where children and pets cannot get to them
- Never use a product that does not have a U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Registration Number
- Replace bait after it's been eaten. Leave bait stations and bait in place for at least 2 weeks after all rat activity has stopped. Monitor on a monthly basis
- Never use *Tres Pasitos* or other illegal bait products. These may include toxic chemicals that could harm you, your family and neighbors, and pets

For more information about pesticides, call the National Pesticide Information Center at 800-858-7378.



Choosing and Working with a Pest Control Company

When finding and working with a pest control company, be clear about what you need done, and monitor performance.

How to Find the Right Company

- Ask your neighbors for referrals
- Look for “integrated pest management” services. These companies are more likely to inspect, monitor and make recommendations about repairs
- Interview companies. Ask for references, including previous customers
- Make sure that the company is licensed with the Illinois Department of Public Health

A Good Company Will...

- Inspect your property before giving you a price quote
- Give you a written inspection report, and an action plan
- Base quotes on inspection findings, not flat fees. The cheapest services are rarely the best
- Make referrals for structural repair, if necessary
- Visit often until the job is done
- Put bait in tamper-resistant containers
- Employ qualified, well-trained exterminators
- Educate you on how to prevent rats
- Work with you until the rats are gone

Work Together!

- Walk around with the pest control professional during each visit, and keep track of work
- Agree on a service plan and cost
- Follow up on referrals and recommendations

Contacting Us

If you have questions about rats, baiting or anything else in this guide, please call/text the Evanston Health and Human Services Department at **847-448-4311** for assistance.

