

Code of Best Practice No. 8 Controlling rats and mice

This Code of Best Practice doesn't provide exact solutions to the problems of controlling rats and mice but following its practical guidance will help to protect rodent controllers, members of the public and animals from the potentially harmful effects of rodenticides.

The main risks

Pesticides are valuable tools in pest management but only when used in a responsible manner. A pesticide is a poison which when misused can cause considerable harm. The main risks when using poison to control rats and mice are to:

- The people handling the rodenticides, if they don't take care
- Users of the area being baited such as children, pets and other animals

This code of practice is intended to guide you in controlling rats and mice to avoid these harmful effects.

Who is this code of practice for?

For anyone controlling rats and mice, in their homes, gardens, farms, and in National Conservation Areas.

Good practice

- It is the **householder or landowners responsibility** to keep rats and mice down in their premises or land:
 - Landowners should make a management plan to keep rodent numbers down
 - Householders should maintain premises, **eliminating entry points** such as gaps under the door, broken windows, etc.
- Rats and mice need **food, water and shelter** to survive. Remove any one of these and you will reduce the problem. The first thing to do is therefore to clean up:
 - Clear **rubbish** from around the house
 - **Clear** away stacks of old pallets, machinery, used equipment etc. If you can't or don't want to dispose of it, make sure it is neatly stacked and offers as little shelter to rats and mice as possible.
 - Clear **weeds**
- It is a waste of time putting down rat bait if there are **abundant alternative foods** around:
 - Always put household waste in a sealed bin
 - Store animal feed (pig, chicken, etc) in lidded, rat-proof bins
 - Keep all foods sealed away from rats and mice
 - Try and avoid having uneaten dog, cat or chicken food around, only put out as much as will be eaten at any 1 time, particularly in the evenings

Clean up!

Rats and mice are only there because there is food, water and shelter.

Using rat and mouse baits

- Rat bait is expensive, so only use it as a **last resort**.
- The best bait to use for **rats** is that formulated as wax blocks.
- The best bait for **mice** is that formulated as grain.
- Use **protective rubber gloves** when handling bait, not your bare hands.
- Place the bait in a protected **bait station**. This protects it from pets and birds, as well as providing a place for rats and mice to sit and eat safely. An ideal bait station is a bamboo tube or plastic drainpipe: for rats, 10 cm (4 inches) in diameter and at least 30 cm (18 inches) long, open at both ends.
- Bait stations should be placed **where rats or mice will easily find them**.
- The number of bait stations and baits to put out will depend on how bad the infestation is. Check the **product label** for instructions:
 - **Rats** travel quite widely and eat a lot at one sitting once they find food, so put out fewer bait stations, each well stocked with bait.
 - For **mice**, you need to put out more bait stations with less bait in each as mice are nibblers and only take a little bite of each food they find.
- Old, **mouldy bait** is not acceptable to rats and mice and won't be eaten, so don't leave it out once it starts to degrade. It might be eaten by chickens and other birds and kill them.

Storing bait

- Bait must be **stored** away from food stuffs, in a locked, well-ventilated area.
- Practice **stock rotation**, so oldest stock is used first.
- Keep copies of all the **labels and Material Safety Datasheets** in a folder outside the store for easy reference.

Things to look out for

- Have you **cleaned up** the area as well as possible?
- Are there any **alternative foods** for rats and mice to eat?
- Are the baits placed so that they are **accessible to rats and mice** but not to other animals and birds?
- Do **pets, livestock or wild animals** use the area you are baiting?

Advice and further information

- Contact Environmental Health on 22500 for advice on rat and mouse control, and for baiting in the event of an infestation in domestic premises.
<http://www.ipm.ucdavis.edu/PMG/PESTNOTES/pn74106.html>