



Rat prevention guide

Multi-residential properties



Property manager or owner,

Rats are common pests of modern-day life. They exist in cities and towns around the world, as well as throughout most urban areas of Canada. Data suggests that global rat populations are on the rise in many parts of the world and the urban centers of Ontario are no exception.

The Region of Peel is working with the community to take a pro-active approach to minimizing rats in Peel as much as possible. To accomplish this, it will take action from all members of the community including residents, property owners, and local businesses.

This Rat Prevention Guide provides preventative measures and techniques to address rats at multi-residential properties. A pro-active approach for controlling rats at these properties is both smart and cost-effective. Identifying rat activity and addressing the issue early saves significant time and money for property management.

The role of the Region of Peel

The Region of Peel (Peel) is working with the community to take a pro-active approach to rats to minimize their expansion as much as possible.

We have developed a Residential Rat Control Subsidy Program along with an Education, Outreach, and Communications Strategy. This education campaign focuses on supporting the community by providing key information through a variety of print and digital platforms. We work with and support the local communities experiencing rat infestations and provide education on current rat prevention and control measures.

We have implemented pest control measures on various Regional construction projects and will continue to take preventative measures on Peel construction sites.

Finally, Peel Public Health is responsible for enforcing Food Safety Regulations in Ontario which address pest control provisions. It is the responsibility of a food premise to ensure all regulations are followed such as keeping garbage and wastes maintained and removed from a food premise, as well as protecting the premise against entry of pests or any conditions that can lead to the harbouring or breeding of pests. Also, rooms where food is prepared, processed, packaged, served, transported, manufactured, handled, sold, and/or offered for sale, shall be kept free from live birds or animals.

For a full list of food safety requirements in Ontario, visit [ontario.ca/laws/regulation/170493#BK16](https://www.ontario.ca/laws/regulation/170493#BK16) "O. Reg. 493/17: FOOD PREMISES (ontario.ca)

What you need to know about rats:

Multi-residential properties of all types are attractive to rats because they generate relatively large amounts of food waste. At night rats can locate food from the same area for several nights in a row, they "move in" as close to the newly found food as possible.



General information

- The brown rat (also known as the Norway rat) is the most common species of rat found in Peel.
- Adult rats weigh between 600-700g (1-1.5 lbs). Rats may appear larger to us because of their thick, hairy coats.
- Rats live from 7-18 months, depending on their access to food and good shelter.
- Female rats can produce up to 200 babies within 1 year.
- Female rats (8 weeks and older) can produce up to 3 litters with 8-12 young (pups). But if food is scarce or undependable, only a few young survive. One typical family of rats (16 rats) will consume about five kg of food per week.
- Young rats should not be confused with adult mice. Young rats have large hind feet (2.5cm) and heads that are large and out-of-proportion to their bodies.

Behaviours/habits

- Rats cannot "flatten out" their bodies and slide beneath any door. It requires a hole the size of a quarter to allow a rat entry beneath a door or through a hole in the wall.
- Rats are attracted to the exteriors of apartment buildings because of the amounts of food odors escaping from windows, door thresholds, waste bins, and any basement compactors.
- Increase in rat populations and infestations occur quickly when their food (often our waste) is abundant and easy to get to.
- Rats cannot chew through any metal or cured concrete and these materials will deny rats entry. But they can gnaw through wood, plastic, and all types of wiring very quickly.

- Rats in Peel prefer to live in burrows outside buildings. Their burrow entrance and exit holes are about 3-4cm wide and there is typically three holes per burrow. The burrows are dug beneath thick bushes, vegetation, or alongside and beneath building foundations.



- Usually, rats establish their exterior and interior nests close to a waste source or other food sources that are within easy reach (E.g., 30 m radius).



Rats and multi-residential properties

- Rats will move inside buildings if the building's doors and penetrating utility lines are not rat-proofed.
- Once inside, they travel up, down and sideways between units by climbing and running along the outside of plumbing pipes. They may build their nests in the walls, ceilings, and subfloors between each of the floors of a building.
- While traveling about inside the walls, rats may invade kitchens in the building (smelling the food) when they discover plumbing pipes that are not sealed and thus allows them entry to the apartment.

Where are the rats coming from?

Rats may be living nearby in fields and parks, along creek banks and other water ways, on farms, or in a neighbour's cluttered backyard or basement. While their numbers are low in Peel, and because rats are active at night, you may not see them.

Even though there are always exceptions, rats are usually not associated with simple explanations. When rats are seen regularly on properties or in yards, more times than not, the rats are there because there is some type of food source. Most of the time, there is simply untidy waste areas within about a 50-75m radius of where the rats are being seen (e.g., back yard areas or basements areas which are not visible from the street).

Once the rats become noticed, it is usually because the previously unseen rats have now discovered easy-to-access food on a private or multi-residential property.

Sometimes rats are "new to the area" to the area because humans commonly move rats from place to place in truck, cars, trains, or delivery trucks from different storage warehouses.



Preventing rats at multi-residential housing properties (MRH)

A pro-active approach for controlling rats at MRH properties is both smart and highly cost-effective.

1. Remaining alert – tips

- (a) Spotting a rat occurrence early saves significant money and time for property management compared to rats that have moved in unnoticed and are now multiplying and spreading in different directions on the property.

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- (b) Keeping rats out of a MRH building is neither expensive nor difficult and is the best approach for any property to remain rat free.



2. Deny rats entry

- (a) Property managers should perform weekly inspections. This includes foundations, doors and the grounds, keeping an eye open for any obvious problem such as newly appearing rat burrows below bushes; doors needing repairs any dog waste issues; proper waste storage and collection procedures.
- (b) If rats are spotted, notify the property's pest control professional as soon as possible.
- (c) Although rat-proofing an apartment building is not difficult to do, however, it must be done right. Spraying canned foam or merely stuffing a wad of stainless steel into a hole is not sufficient. In most cases, a contractor, or a pest professional trained in the rodent-proofing of doors and utility lines are the most qualified people for the job. Over the past few years, new technology and materials have emerged that provide highly effective rodent proof door sweeps and high-tech stainless mesh materials for sealing holes and gaps around pipes.
- (d) It is particularly important to keep ground-level storage rooms tight from the exterior. With high-rise facilities, all doors to basement areas must be rodent-proofed. Weather stripping a door will not rodent-proof a door. In addition to denying any night-time exploring rats entry into the building (or discouraging them from burrowing next to the building), rodent proofing door bases decreases the amounts of waste odors leaking out to draw rats to the property in the first place.

- (e) Close all high-rise basement rooms, and ground floor maintenance rooms of town house units, all conduit pipes (electrical, plumbing, cables) that penetrate through walls from the outside, or through any basement ceiling connecting to the ceilings, floors and walls of upper floor /adjacent apartments. This can be done using ordinary plates at the point of pipe or cable penetration. If the plates do not fit tightly to the wall surface, they can be properly sealed with a quality hi-grade sealant (never use canned spray foam).

3. No food, no rats

- (a) Hungry rats rapidly start eliminating one another or their offspring, and thus exterminate their own numbers “naturally”. If the survivors still have trouble finding food due to cleanliness, they will abandon a property and go looking for new spots with easy access to food (usually to the closest property with accessible food source (ie waste)).
- (b) All waste rooms and areas of multi-res buildings should be cleaned daily. If waste bins are being used (town houses) and/or basement compactors (high- rise), the bins and/or compactors must also be maintained from accumulating greasy residues, spills, leaks. Of particular importance are the hard-to-reach, tight spaces below compactors as rats love tight spots where food fragments collect and remain. The outside surfaces of all single bins and their lids must remain clean, otherwise the greasy films left on the bin surfaces create the odours that attract new rats.
- (c) It is important to note that a once-a-week cleanups is not the best practice for preventing rats. This is because rats detect the attractive and increasing odours produced by the multiple days of accumulating food waste. Prolonged waste and collection give rodents multiple opportunities to discover properties and invade.



- (d) If waste with food is not scheduled for collection for several days (or longer), it is essential that all waste bins contain tight lids, and the bins are maintained free of food residues and films. Any lids that are sitting open on top of trash of course, will not only attract rats, but also raccoons, and other wild animals.



4. Deny rats exterior shelter

- (a) Multi-residential property grounds should be kept free of any junk piles, or idle old equipment of any sort because rats can use these as a shelter. Storage sheds should be kept orderly, and materials and equipment elevated off the floor by about 40-45 cm.

- (b) Maintain landscaping to ensure materials and shrubs do not become overgrown and form thick caves for rats to burrow. These “caves” are among the rat’s favorite place to find shelter because they are so well-protected and out-of-sight to both people, and the rat’s natural predators. Once shrubs become thick and hug the ground, they can’t be easily cleaned of wind-blown trapped litter (also very attractive to rats).



5. MRH rat extermination programs

Despite the good property management procedures discussed above, sometimes determined rats still manage to invade MRH properties.

- (a) Rats inside and around building exteriors require the knowledge and experience of certified and experienced pest professionals. Even still, rarely can rats be eliminated without the partnership of the property management and the tenants.
- (b) Keep in mind that the pest professional's exterior bait boxes will not prevent rodents from invading a MRH property. These boxes are meant to help keep a rodent problem under control, and in some cases, they will prevent an issue from developing severely.
- (c) Food waste management is the key to preventing rats on your property will show little interest in a pest professional's baits or traps if there is ample food waste and easy access.
- (d) The best way to address rat control is to focus efforts on the entire population of rats on your property using these prevention methods.

For further assistance:

Visit [peelregion.ca/rat-subsidy-program](https://www.peelregion.ca/rat-subsidy-program)

Contact the Region of Peel at

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