



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. 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 Peel Region is working with the community to take a pro-active approach to minimizing rat populations in Peel. 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 rat populations at multi-residential properties. A pro-active approach for controlling rat populations at these properties is both smart and cost-effective. Identifying rat activity and addressing the issue early saves time and money for property management.

The role of Peel Region

Peel Region is working with the community to take a pro-active approach to minimize rat populations in Peel.

We have taken an educational approach to rat prevention following an Integrated Pest Management (IPM) method. This method is used to control rat populations in the community through a combination of practices including education and awareness. We work with and support the local communities experiencing rat infestations by providing 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.

Under the Food Premises regulation in Ontario, food premises are required to protect against the entry of pests and kept free of conditions that lead to pest infestations. It is the responsibility of every food premise to ensure all regulations are followed including the removal of garbage and any conditions that can lead to the harbouring or breeding of pests. Food premises must ensure that garbage and food wastes are collected and removed from a food premise to maintain sanitary conditions.

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 attract rat populations because they generate relatively large amounts of garbage and food wastes. Rats are attracted to food odours from waste stored in basement rooms, garbage bins, sheds, and garages.



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 g and 700 g (1 to 1.5 lbs), though their thick, hairy coats can make them seem larger.
- Rats can live up to 7 to 18 months, depending on their access to food and water and good shelter sources.
- Female rats (8 weeks and older) can produce up to 3 litters with 8 to 12 young rats. If sources of food, water and shelter is scarce or unavailable, only a few young rats survive.
- One family of rats (consisting of 16 rats) will consume about 5 kg of food per week.
- Young rats should not be confused with adult mice. Young rats have large hind feet (2.5 cm) and heads that are large and out-of-proportion to their bodies.
- Rats are much bigger than mice. Rats have smaller pinned back ears and mice have large floppy ears.

Behaviours/habits

- Rats are attracted to the exteriors of apartment buildings because of easy access to food and water sources and food odours escaping from windows, door thresholds, garbage bins, and basement compactors.
- Rats cannot “flatten out” their bodies and slide beneath doors. It requires a hole the size of a quarter to allow a rat entry beneath a door or through gaps around pipes, walls or floors.
- 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. These materials will prevent rats entry. Rats can gnaw through wood, plastic, and all types of wiring very quickly.
- Rats in Peel prefer to live in burrows outside buildings. Rat burrow entrance and exit holes are about 3 cm to 4 cm wide. There are typically three holes per burrow. The burrows are dug beneath thick bushes, vegetation, or alongside and beneath building foundations.
- Rats establish their exterior and interior nests close to a garbage 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 utility lines entering the building are not sealed properly.
- Once inside, rat can travel up between units by climbing and running along the outside of plumbing pipes. Rats can build their nests in the walls, ceilings, and subfloors of a building.
- While traveling inside the walls, rats can invade kitchens in the building identifying food and water sources and shelter. Rats can discover plumbing pipes that are not sealed, allowing them entry to the apartment.

Where are the rats coming from?

Rats live nearby in fields and parks, along creek banks and water ways, on farms, or in a cluttered backyard or basement.

Rats can be seen on properties or in yards because of easy access to food, water and shelter sources. Most of the time rats are seen when there are untidy waste areas within a 50 m to 75 m radius.

Rats can move to new areas or areas where there was no rat activity in the past. This movement can be due to changes in human activity. Humans commonly move rats from place to place in trucks, cars, trains and through delivery or transportation from facilities or warehouses.



Preventing rats at multi-residential housing (MRH) properties

A pro-active approach for controlling rat populations at MRH properties is both smart and highly cost-effective. The best way to address rat control is to focus efforts on the entire population of rats on your property using these prevention methods.

1. Remaining alert

- a. Rats can quickly multiply and spread in different directions on the property. Spotting a rat infestation early can save money and time for property management.



2. Deny rats entry

- a. Property managers should perform weekly inspections. This means keeping a look out for newly appearing rat burrows on the property grounds, maintaining proper garbage storage and collection procedures, inspecting foundations, doors and windows, and addressing pet waste concerns on the property.
- b. Rat-proofing a multi-residential housing property is important to prevent rats from entering the property. Property managers should ensure repairs of foundations, doors and windows. It may be appropriate to use a contractor or a pest control professional trained in the rat-proofing of doors and utility lines. Spraying canned foam or stuffing a wad of stainless steel into a hole is not sufficient for denying rats entry. New technology and materials have emerged that provide effective rat control including rat proof door sweeps and high-tech stainless mesh materials for sealing holes and gaps around pipes.
- c. Keep ground-level storage rooms tightly closed from the exterior. With high-rise facilities, all doors to basement areas must be rat-proofed. In addition to denying rats entry into the building (or discouraging them from burrowing next to the building), rat proofing door bases decreases the amounts of waste odours leaking out to draw rats and prevents rats from finding sources of food, water and shelter.

- d. Close all high-rise basement storage rooms, and ground floor maintenance rooms of town house units. Seal all electrical, plumbing or cables pipes that penetrate through walls, ceilings or floors from the outside and neighboring apartments units. This can be done using ordinary plates at the point of pipe or cable entry. If the plates do not fit tightly to the wall surface, they can be properly sealed with a quality high-grade sealant. Seal all electrical, plumbing or cables pipes that penetrate through walls, ceilings or floors from the outside and neighboring apartments units. Avoid using canned spray foam to seal holes.

3. No food and water, no rats

- a. Remove easy access to food and water. Hungry rats quickly start exterminating themselves “naturally”. If the survivors have trouble finding sources of food and water, they will abandon a property and go looking for new spots.
- b. All waste rooms and areas of multi-residential properties should be cleaned daily. If garbage bins are being used in townhouses or basement compactors in high-rise buildings, the bins or compactors must be cleaned and maintained from greasy residues, spills and leaks. The hard-to-reach, tight spaces below compactors must be cleaned thoroughly because rats are attracted to tight spots where food fragments collect and remain.
- c. If garbage is not scheduled for collection for several days (or longer), it is essential that all garbage bins contain tight lids, and the bins are maintained free of food residues and films. Lids that are sitting open on top of garbage bins will attract rats, raccoons, and other wild animals.



4. Deny rats exterior shelter

- a. Multi-residential property grounds should be kept free of any garbage piles, or idle old equipment because rats can use these as a shelter. Storage sheds should be kept tidy, and materials and equipment elevated off the floor by about 40 cm to 45 cm.
- b. Maintain property grounds to ensure shrubs, grass and weeds do not become overgrown and form thick caves for rats to burrow. These “caves” are attractive to rats because they provide shelter and keep the rats well-protected and out-of-sight of people and natural predators. Once shrubs, grass and weeds become thick and hug the ground, they can't be easily cleaned and can trap wind-blown litter.





5. MRH rat extermination programs

Despite good property management practices, sometimes rats are present, and infestations can occur. Prevention of rat infestations require the community to work together with cooperation and partnership of the property management and the tenants.

- a. Addressing the presence of rats inside and around buildings may require the knowledge and experience of a certified and experienced pest control professional that may recommend baiting.
- b. Pest control bait boxes will not necessarily prevent rats from entering inside. The boxes will help keep the infestations under control outdoors and may lessen the chances to a problem indoors. Pest control and removing entry points to the indoors work together in preventing an issue indoors.
- c. Rats will show little interest in a pest control professional's baits or traps if there is easy access to food, water and shelter sources.

For further assistance:

Visit [peelregion.ca/health/protecting/rat-prevention/](https://www.peelregion.ca/health/protecting/rat-prevention/)

Contact the Region of Peel at **905-791-7800**

