



# A Guide to Roof Rat



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Alameda County Department of Environmental Health

## Appearance

Roof rats, sometimes called black rats, are slightly smaller than Norway rats, averaging between 8 to 10 ounces in weight. Their characteristic tail is longer than their body and head combined. They have a pointed nose, and hairless ears approximately  $\frac{3}{4}$ " long which will pull down and cover their large eyes.



## Behavior

Roof rats are found throughout Alameda County, especially in suburban areas. They are nocturnal like other rats, but have a unique preference for heights. They have a sense of security traveling on utility lines, tree branches, fence tops, etc. They nest in dense vegetation such as the tops of palm trees or vines and are the most common rodent species found in attics. The population density and their range of travel is determined by the amount of available food in the area. They normally forage in a 100 to 200 foot radius. In the wild rats eat vegetables, fruit, nuts, seeds, snails and cereal grains. Around humans rats eat pet food, bird seed and uncovered garbage. Rats require about an ounce of food and water per day. Their droppings are black, about  $\frac{1}{2}$ " long, pointed on both ends and shaped like a banana.

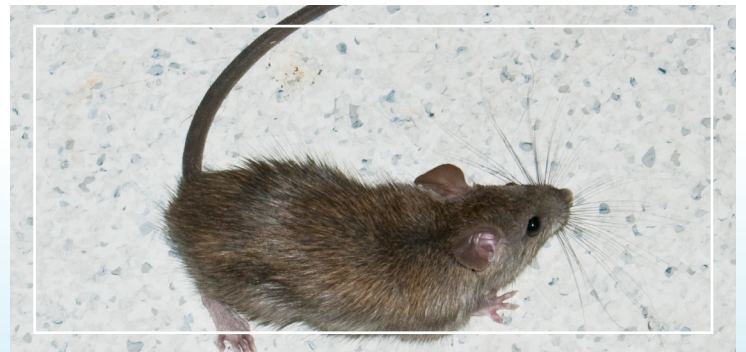
The roof rat matures sexually at about 3 to 5 months and can produce two to six litters of 6 to 8 young per litter a year. They live for approximately a year.

## Prevention

Sanitation and exclusion are the most effective measures you can take to reduce rodent populations. When there is evidence of rodent activity like droppings, rub-marks, gnaw marks, and noises of gnawing, scratching or running, it is likely that a rat infestation already exists. Trapping or outdoor baiting is usually necessary to reduce the number of rats immediately. Trapping is the most effective and safe method to use in homes.



Wooden snap traps are effective and can be purchased at most hardware stores. Traps can be baited with a variety of foods; peanut butter is the most popular because it is easy to use and attractive to mice and other rodents. There are a number of different types of traps on the market with varying methods of capture.



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Proper trap placement is very important. Set traps along rodent runways and travel paths where you frequently see rodents or find droppings. For roof rats, especially, setting traps along fences or other above-ground routes of travel can be very successful. Select locations where roof rats might be coming down from their nests to find food, along overhead beams where they travel and attics that are close to the nest. Glue traps can be used but are less effective than snap traps. More traps often leads to greater success.



Structural modifications provide the most permanent and secure strategy for rodent proofing. Build a rat-proof structures for storing food, bird seed, and dog food in containers with tight-fitting lids. Seal all openings larger than ¼ inch to exclude both rats and mice. Repair all broken ventilation screens around the foundation and under the eaves. For roof rats, thinning dense vegetation, cutting down tree branches; removing overhanging tree limbs will make the environment less conducive to roof rat infestations. Call our District or submit an online request for an inspection and assessment if you would like assistance with a roof rat infestation in or around your home.

Ref: <http://ipm.ucanr.edu/PMG/PEST-NOTES/pn74106.html>



*Roof Rat  
Stuck in Bird Feeder*



ALAMEDA COUNTY  
**VECTOR  
CONTROL**

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