

*Appreciation and Credit to the Somerville, Marlborough, and Hudson Health Departments for sharing their resources! *

Working Together to Prevent Rodents

Rats have been a part of the Massachusetts ecosystem since the area was originally settled in the early 17th century.

It is our shared goal, both as a town and as a community, to work together to mitigate the population of rodents in Bellingham. The Board of Health encourages community members to band together in the prevention efforts by identifying and assisting with the maintenance of properties that may provide harborage to rodents.

Rats need three things to thrive, **food, water, and shelter**. The best way to prevent rats in your home/neighborhood is by making your house unattractive to rats by preventing access to these sources. Please see the list below for potential sources of food, water, and shelter in your home/property.

Prevention Methods – Food

- Use town issued trash containers with a secure lid, always keeping them tightly closed. Never store trash outside of the securely closed bin.
- Regularly inspect your trash bins for signs of rat entry (I.E. bites, scratches), and clean your bins periodically to discourage vermin. Contact the DPW for a new barrel if yours has been damaged by rats and can no longer be securely closed.
- Refrain from leaving out food for birds, wildlife, stray cats, or other animals. Any food available to other wildlife will also be available to rats, providing them with a constant food source.
- If you would still like to do so, it is best to only use bird feeders. **Never** leave food for animals directly on the ground, take feeders in at night, and promptly clean up any spills. Consider installing a seed catcher tray to prevent seeds from falling to the ground.
- Do not leave pet food/waste out overnight
- **Compost properly.**

Prevention Methods – Shelter

- Keep outdoor plants trimmed so that they don't touch the house or other buildings. Trim them so that they have a "V"-shape, allowing a clear view of the ground that will discourage burrowing.
- Remove trash and yard debris frequently to eliminate possible burrowing areas.
- Store boxes, firewood, and equipment off the ground at least 18 inches away from walls.
- Regularly inspect the exterior of your home for holes or gaps that could provide rat or mouse entry and take steps to remove these entry points as quickly as possible. Rats can fit through holes that are $\frac{1}{2}$ an inch wide, and mice can fit through holes $\frac{1}{4}$ inch wide. Common places where these holes can develop include around pipes, cables, wires that enter the home, or uncovered dryer vents
- Inspect basement windows or doors left open, damaged, or not tightly installed, thus having gaps to allow entry

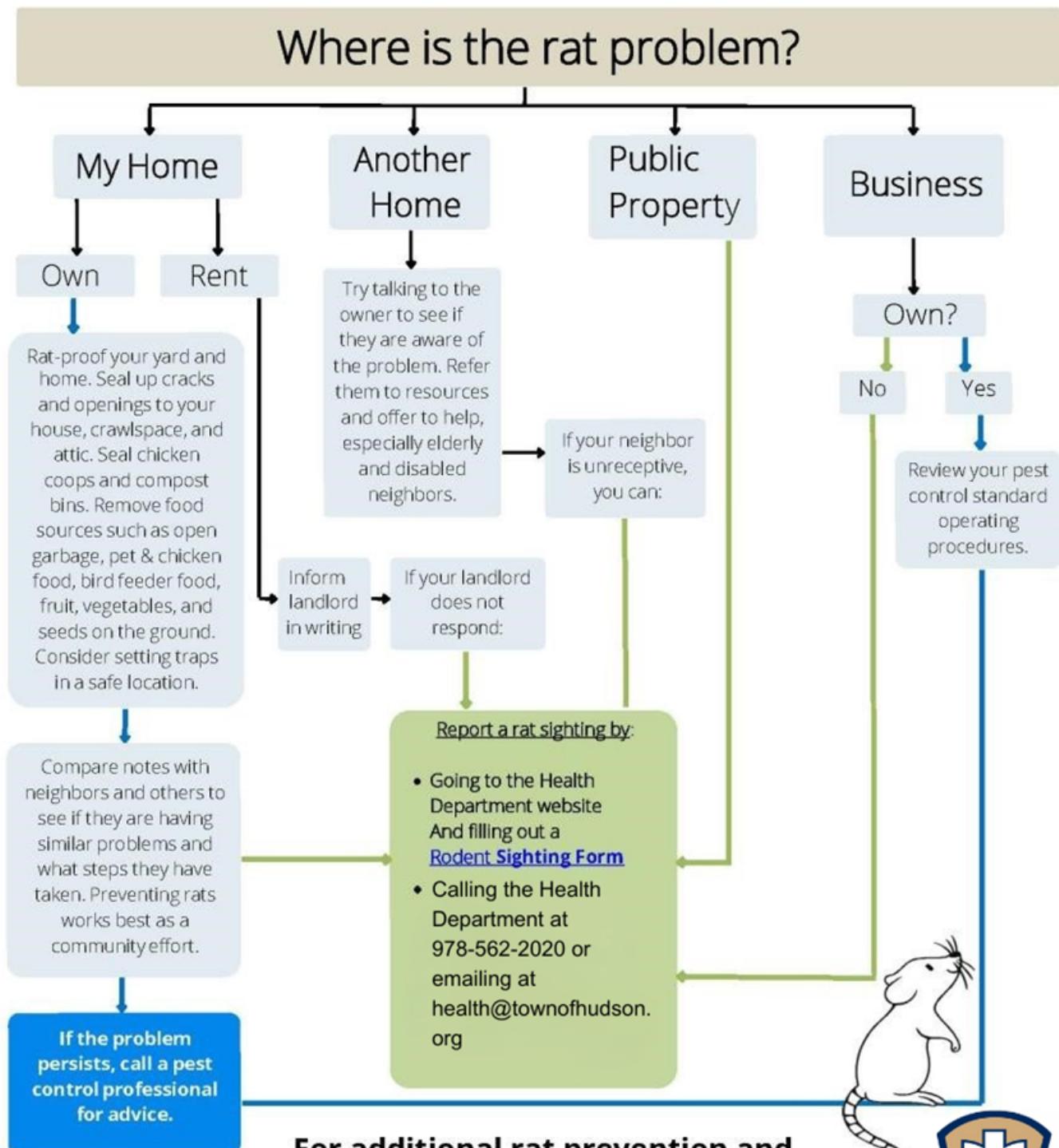
Prevention Methods - Water

- Empty any sources of standing water so that they don't sit out overnight such as birdbaths, water bowls for pets, or other outdoor items that can hold water
- Repair water leaks/drips at faucets, hoses, and AC units that could cause long-term standing water.

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WHAT TO DO IF YOU SEE SIGNS OF RATS

Use this tool to help you decide!



For additional rat prevention and control resources, visit our website at townofhudson.org/health-department



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Rodent Proof Your Garden

Protect your garden from rats, mice, and other potential pests!

Gardens make healthy foods more accessible for everyone! You can prevent rodents in your garden, by reducing their access to **food, water, and shelter**:

► Food:

- Use raised garden beds and hardware cloth ($\frac{1}{4}$ inch) to make it harder for rats to access your garden.
- Store seedlings inside or in tight lid containers before planting them outside.
- Consider picking produce earlier to limit dropped produce.

► Water:

- Monitor any drips or leaks from hoses and sprinkler systems.
- Improve drainage by adding organic matter (compost, shredded leaves) to soil so water does not settle.

► Shelter:

- Cut grass, weeds, and leaves 1-foot back from buildings and walls.
- Monitor and fill burrows (rat holes) with dry, loose soil or pea stone.



Resource: Brooklyn Botanic Garden; Institute for Local Self-Reliance

Do:

- Clean garden regularly and avoid clutter.
- Use plants that deter rats: peppermint, garlic, onion, citrus.



Don't:

- Leave produce and waste on the ground.
- Use clay or dense soils.



For garden waste pickup, contact the City of Somerville Department of Public Works. Call 311 (617-666-3311) to sign up for the **Residential Rodent Control Assistance Program**. Contact the City's Environmental Health Coordinator for **questions and tips**: aprivett@somervillema.gov.



Mayor Katjana Ballantyne

somervillema.gov/rodentsaway
for rat prevention tips and resources!



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Rodent Proof Your Compost

Protect your garden from rats, mice, and other potential pests!

Composting is a great way to enrich soil and reduce rodent activity because it diverts foodscraps from waste and returns it to the soil. To prevent rodents in your compost, **reduce access to food, water, and shelter:**

► Food:

- Fresh food scraps should be buried at the bottom of the compost pile. Do not leave food scraps visible.
- Do not compost cooked foods, eggs, dairy, meat, fish, bones, fat, oils, or grease.

► Water:

- Cover irrigation pipes with hardware cloth (1/4 inch).
- Always keep dry compost amendments (malted barley, rock dust) on hand and mix with food scraps to manage wet material and odors.

► Shelter:

- Maintain at least 3ft of open space around each composting pile or bin. That's about an arms-length away.
- Poke and move compost piles regularly so rodents do not see an opportunity for burrowing holes for nests.

Rodent-Deterring Composting Systems



Tumblers, Bokashi Composts, Bin Systems with Lids

Resource: Brooklyn Botanic Garden; Institute for Local Self-Reliance

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