

Rats

Norwegian Rat (*Rattus novegicus*) Ship Rat (*Rattus rattus*)

There are two introduced European rat species in New Zealand, the Norwegian Rat (*Rattus novegicus*) and the Ship Rat (*Rattus rattus*).

Rats are a threat to breeding birds as they prey on eggs and chicks. Ship rats are a particular problem as they are exceptional tree climbers. Our native birds have not evolved with rats and have no defences against them. Many native bird species also breed very slowly and cannot keep up with the present rate of predation.



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The Department of Conservation carries out rat control in areas where there are endangered native species, such as kokako and kereru. The aim of this control is to keep rat numbers low enough to allow eggs to hatch and young birds to survive. In areas where rat control has taken place, there have been observations of great recovery of seedlings, indicating rats also have an impact of vegetation. Rats are widespread throughout the Manawatu- Wanganui Region.

Controlling Rats

Poison pellets in bait stations is an effective method to control rats. Rat poison can be purchased from your local farm supply store. A bait station can be made out of a piece of drainage pipe (the solid type with no drainage holes in it). The bait station should be around 50cm long and wide enough that the rat can walk inside it. It should not be wide enough for other non-target animals (such as family pets or birds) to get inside. Fix the tube to the ground or tree branch using U-shaped wire. Place 4-6 pellets in each bait station. Check your bait station regularly and remove any mouldy or wet bait. Bait stations should ideally be set at 100 metre intervals.

If you are also carrying out possum control you can use a possum bait such as 'Talon' or 'Pestoff'. These are available at most stock and station agencies. They are both effective on rats as well as possums. Horizons offers advice and information, and if appropriate a user-pays service, to assist the control of these troublesome rodents.

The Rat is identified in Horizon's Animal Pest Management Strategy as a 'Non-Statutory problem animal'. This means that it is an undesirable animal, but has not met all the criteria for inclusion as an animal pest. Where values in High Value Conservation Areas (HVCA) are at risk and in other exceptional circumstances these animals may also be controlled by Horizons. HVCA's are important areas of native bush and wildlife habitat in the Region. In urban areas, your local City or District Council and Health Department can also assist with the control of rats.