



\$1 Million More To Fight Rats As Rodent Complaints Multiply

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CITY HALL — Vowing to step up the city's efforts get Chicago's exploding rat population under control, Mayor Rahm Emanuel Friday proposed spending an additional \$1 million to get rid of the disease-ridden vermin.

That budget boost will allow the city to add five crews of workers charged with reducing the number of disease-ridden critters scurrying through Chicago's streets and alleys, officials said. That will bring the number of rat control crews to 30 in 2018, officials said.

In the spring of 2016, the city had eight rat control crews, records show.

In addition, Emanuel will ask the City Council to earmark an additional \$500,000 to purchase 10,000 new black garbage carts to replace those gnawed through by rodents determined to make a tasty meal of refuse, officials said.

City officials will pay for the new carts and additional rat-fighting crews with money saved by making the city's garbage-pickup system more efficient, officials said.

The city received 39,000 rat complaints in 2017, and responded to all of them within five days, officials said. That's up 30 percent from 2016.

The explosion in Chicago's rat population has been caused by three consecutive mild winters and a boom in construction projects that disturbed their underground lairs, city officials said.

"We will continue our zealous fight against rodents," said Streets and Sanitation Commissioner Charles Williams.

Crews will continue using "dry ice in parks and green spaces to determine if is suitable citywide," Williams said.

People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals object to the lethal technique, with a representative telling DNAinfo that the rodents "deserve our protection."

In addition, city crews will also continue testing the impact of a poison dubbed Contrapest that makes rodents infertile, Williams said.

If effective, the bait could become a regular tool used enclosed or contained areas where rodents breed, officials said.

The best way to reduce the number of rats is to keep garbage covered in alleys and keep yards free of pet waste, city officials said.