

Rat crisis in Diepsloot

27th October 2017

When the heavy rains fell on Monday, 9 October, rats in Diepsloot scurried into residents' shacks for shelter.

Resident David Mokgalaka said, "During the [recent] heavy rainfall, the sewer rats tried to escape low lying areas, so they took shelter in our shacks. I woke up one morning and my child's ear was nibbled on. The rats feast on our children's flesh."

He added that living among rats was not a life for any human being.

Fourways Review saw first-hand how the rats have infested the Diepsloot community. Dead rats were rotting on the sidewalks while live rats were running in between the bathroom stalls, the food vendors and shacks.

Resident Lucas Hlongwane said it almost seems like the rats have doubled in number since the rain started.

"We can't leave [any food] lying around in our homes and not even cats work anymore," said Hlongwane.

Gordon Quarmby, pest control operator from Pest Control Pros said, "The best thing to do in case of rat infestation in large communities is to make sure no food is left lying around or to use rodent bait stations."

He explained that these stations lure the rats in and poison them while, at the same time, capturing the rat in a box for disposal. The rodent bait stations keep children, pets and animals that are not targeted away from the poison rodent bait.

Unfortunately, Quarmby said he doesn't know of a way to keep the rats from coming into the shacks during heavy rains.

Jonathan Haw, from EcoSolutions, suggested, "They shouldn't use rat poison because rat poison is a short-term fix that actually isn't a fix at all. The rat populations will just bounce back and poison in areas like Diepsloot is a real problem [when children get hold of it]."

"A short-term solution would be to have a massive litter drive, where [the community] comes out to pick up litter, a long-term solution would be owl boxes, litter management and an

environmental [study] to see where the rats are coming from, where those rats are getting in and ways to exclude them from certain areas.”

Haw said Diepsloot would be the perfect environment for owl houses because of all the farm areas around Diepsloot and it's a high rodent population.

He added that communities can help by managing litter, embracing owls and their environment and schools should each have an owl box that's maintained.

Lisa Sukdev, public relations manager at Montecasino, said some cultures believe that owls are used for witchcraft and that is why Montecasino has done awareness campaigns about the benefit of owls in rodent control.

PR councillor Sean Kreusch said, “The poor control of food waste and other dumping means a scourge of rodents and disease. The City needs to step in and assist in this matter through integrated approaches to waste collection, pest control and community support.”

Jan van Niekerk, Region A's operations manager for auxiliary services said it is important for the City to do litter management, educate the community on litter management and to create better infrastructure for drainage and sewage systems. He explained that they are eight people on their team taking care of Region A, who put out poison as a short-term solution but it was not enough. A long-term solution would be litter management and better drainage infrastructure.

“Rats want water, shelter and food – the community must make an effort to keep their environment as clean as possible,” said van Niekerk.