



Rat population booms in Round Rock

Christy Millward, KVUE 6:39 PM. CST December 13, 2017

WILLIAMSON COUNTY, TEXAS - A Round Rock woman said she's noticed a growing problem of rats in her neighborhood, and she's not the only one.

"Usually, we'll have them. Usually here, and then we usually put one like along the fence," said Melanie Foster as she shows KVUE the rat traps she sets out in her yard each night. "This is insane when you've already killed 25 and you're still seeing rats in your yard. It's a bigger issue."

She showed KVUE, the rat droppings around her patio furniture, and said she's seen the rodents roaming the neighborhood.

"To have to set a trap every night and to have to go the next morning, and to try to do that isn't fun," said Foster. "I get it all summer long. I get it all winter long, but it's gotten worse. It's actually to where, solely, I'm actually seeing them in the daytime now."

Foster has lived in her Round Rock home for more than 10 years, but in the past four or five years, she's seen the rat problem in her neighborhood get worse.

"This year has been the worst -- more activity. Right now, if you go in the backyard, you can see where they've been. You can see their path," said Foster.

She thought it may be just a problem in her neighborhood, until she looked at Facebook.

"When I saw how many people were having issues, I realized it was a real big issue," said Foster.

She showed KVUE a few of the postings from a Round Rock community page.

"They actually had one in their house that they killed," said Foster with one photo.

Some of the pictures are unbelievable.

"That's a big rat," said Foster as she looked at a man holding a rat he allegedly caught in his Round Rock home.

Foster said the postings are coming from all over the city.

"So you're talking about from Brushy Creek, Stony Point, all the way back here. It's a bigger issue than just a single home," said Foster.

“When you're starting to see them during the day, there's something wrong,” said Brian Kelly, with ABC home and commercial services.

Kelly said they've had to increase their staffing after seeing a 40 percent boost in rodent calls in the past few years.

He said the rat population in Central Texas has exploded, specifically in North Austin and Round Rock.

According to Kelly, that's caused by two things: one being years of rain, creating a lush habitat.

“What water means is habitat, and so as habitat gets better, populations explode,” said Kelly.

He also said another factor is all of the new development and construction in sites that were once open fields and homes for the rats.

“When conditions are all favorable, they're fat and happy,” said Kelly.

Kelly said there are several things you can do to help like cleaning up debris around your home, not leaving pet food outside, and sealing openings in your house.

“It's usually worse during the cold weather. They're breeding year round. But normally as it gets colder, it drives them in,” said Kelly.

Kelly said often times customers with rodent problems wait too long to call for help.

“The consequence of waiting too long is damaging the structure,” said Kelly.

According to ABC, Common signs of a rodent infestation include:

- Droppings: These pellets are often left behind in places where food is stored, such as kitchen cabinets or pantries, as well as under sinks, inside chewed cardboard boxes, along baseboards and on top of wall beams.
- Gnaw marks: Mice are known to bite through walls, wood and wires. The damage to wiring within walls can increase the risk of a house fire.
- Nests: Rodents prefer to nest in dark, secluded areas where there is little chance of disturbance. Be on the lookout for shredded paper products, cotton, packing materials and other fabrics, as house mice like to build nests out of these materials.
- Rub marks: Rats tend to leave dark grease or dirt marks — from their oily fur — along walls and floorboards as they follow a trail throughout the home between their nest and food.
- Strange noises: Scurrying in the walls or in the attic could mean a rodent family is present. Rodents are especially fond of attics as it's an insulated area for nest building.

KVUE spoke to the City of Round Rock, who said this isn't an animal control problem because rats don't carry rabies.

But according to the Center for Disease Control, they can spread more than 35 other diseases to humans.