

Rats on the rise in Belmont and beyond

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THE ISSUE: Belmont has seen a big uptick in rat sightings this year. **THE IMPACT:** The creatures cause disruptions, invade basements and disturb residents.

Brianne Gray, a second year graduate student at Boston University's School of Public Health, made an interesting discovery during her internship with the Belmont Health Department this summer. Rat complaints are on the rise.

According to Belmont Health Director Wesley Chin, there has been a 40 percent jump in the number of complaints this year compared to last year. Since January, his office has received more than 70 calls from residents who have seen rats on their property including a resident on Oak Avenue which actually spotted one in their toilet in the middle of the night.

Chin said rats only need a half-inch opening to get in anywhere so if there's an opening in a pipe and they are thirsty, they will get in.

Gray's internship turned into a rat study when she observed how many complaint calls were coming in. She decided to study rat sightings in Belmont from 2015 to the present to track how it may have changed. What she learned is, they appear to be moving toward Cambridge. She continues to see similar clustering in the Hull and Beech Street areas, but more recently, they are being spotted in the Watson Road area.