

Wheatfield Prison bosses start cleaning project to deal with rat infestation

By Darragh Mcdonagh, 24 SEP 2017



Prison bosses have implemented an action plan and cleaning project at Wheatfield Prison in response to a large-scale rat infestation.

Rodents have been reported in areas including kitchens, a medical unit, and a workshop at the prison; according to documents released under the Freedom of Information Act.

A “dead-rodent smell” was also reported in the search area and in a prison boardroom, although no carcasses could be located and the areas were instead treated with odour neutraliser.

It was reported earlier this year that prisoners had witnessed up to 30 rats being killed by an individual using a shovel, while others spotted two rats eating a dead rodent on a landing near the cells.

The Irish Prison Service declined to comment in relation to these specific incidents but stated that the reports related to an issue that arose at Wheatfield Prison last February.

“At the time, prison management were aware of the problem in Wheatfield and an action plan, including a large-scale cleaning project of the grounds, was put in place to address the issue,” said a spokesman. However, inspection reports compiled by the pest-control company used by the IPS show that the rodent problem at Wheatfield Prison was evident for at least two years prior to the implementation of the action plan.

In 2015, the pest-control service carried out a treatment for the presence of rodents in the prison surgery and in its segregation unit, which is typically used for criminal gang members.

A second anti-rodent treatment was required in the surgery less than a month later, and a residual spray treatment for crawling and flying insects was carried out on the same day.

In total, the pest-control company attended the main kitchen at Wheatfield Prison nine times during 2015, as well as providing services in the mess kitchen eight times in the same year



Last July, the pest-control company was called in response to reports of rodent activity at the back of the prison search area. Upon inspection, a company operative found an entire “enclave” of rodents underneath cabins.

In October, the company was called again as a result of a “dead-rodent smell” in the search area. No dead rodent could be found, so they applied the affected area with odour neutraliser.

A month later, there were further reports of a smell in the search area as well as in a prison boardroom. Again, no evidence of dead rodents could be recovered.

The garden area at Wheatfield Prison was also a hive of activity for rodents during 2016. The pest-control company found a large number of burrows, which they planted with bait.

Pest-control treatment was also required to combat rats in a welder’s workshop, a medical unit, two kitchens, and in the prison sewer system during the same year.

A spokesman for the IPS said that the health, safety and welfare of prisoners, staff and visitors was and continues to be of the utmost importance.

“The problem was swiftly dealt with and the pest-control company, which the Prison Service utilises across all prison buildings, has carried out regular inspections in the prison to monitor for any further occurrences,” he added.