

# Driving

## Vancouver Island rats sending cars to the shop in record numbers this season

Coleman Molnar | January 28, 2021

It was 2020 that was the actual Year of the Rat according to the Chinese zodiac, but 2021 is also looking pretty good for the rodents in various parts of Canada. Rat sightings have doubled in Alberta recently, and now word of an increase in car repair shop visits due to rat problems is coming in from Vancouver Island.

CHEK News in Victoria, B.C. reports the animals are causing damage to the soy-lined wires under the hoods of local cars in record numbers. One of the mechanics they spoke to about the issue is Wade McPhedrain of Wade's Auto Works in Courtenay. He says he sees three or four rat-damage cases come through his shop each week.

"They just seem to keep breeding and we've seen way more evidence of it in people's cars," said McPhedrain. "What they do is chew it right off at the connectors, any exposed wire. They go for the easy wires first, which makes your car not run."

The owner of Nanaimo's The Pest Doctor, Richard Johnstone, is also seeing "one of the busiest rodent seasons that [he] can remember."

Short of swapping all the wiring in your car for something less appetizing, there are some precautions vehicle owners can take if they find their neighbourhood suddenly host to a growing mischief of rats.

For starters, if it's appropriate (which it won't be for many Canadians this time of year) you can leave the hood up. Rats want a warm, dry place, so if you leave the front door open all the time, so to speak, they're less likely to make themselves at home.

Another anti-rat hack is to find a few safe places to tie some sheets of fabric softener around the engine – apparently they don't like that – or spray some peppermint oil or rat-specific products that can deter the rodents.