

## **Increased rat population in Somerset says pest controller**

**"RATS are on the rampage...invading abandoned offices and seeking refuge in people's homes"**

...These are the words of Somerset pest controller, Tim Cox, who has seen a rapid increase in the rat population lately.

In the UK, reports have suggested a 25 per cent increase in the rat population - taking it to an estimated 150 million.

During the pandemic, urban tranquillity (whilst the human population stays at home), combined with a decrease in commercial food waste (whilst the hospitality sector is closed), has seen rats establish new nests in domestic and commercial properties as they seek out warmth and food.

"I'm astounded at the volume of call outs I'm receiving to tackle signs of rodent infestation and damage," said Tim, who runs i-Pest Intelligent Pest Control.

"The pandemic has seen numbers increase beyond anything the pest control industry has ever seen."

And increased food waste in residential areas, as we are stuck at home during lockdown, has encouraged rodent residents to seek refuge in our homes.

"Rats are canny creatures and they can navigate their way through surprisingly small spaces, all in a bid to find food and warmth," added Tim.

"Once settled, their ability to reproduce is remarkable. But there are some simple measures we can take to minimise the likelihood of an infestation."

### **Tim's top tips on managing rodents in homes and offices:**

1. Secure waste

The obvious attraction for rodents in homes and offices? Food waste. Make sure food waste is in a secure bin, preferably a metal bin with a sealed lid, to prevent rats indulging in its contents.

## 2. Barricade the house, garden and office

Rats navigate their way through the smallest of spaces, so check around the office for gaps in bricks and mortar and seal them up. Check the moveable ceiling tiles in offices, office ceilings are a rodent's favourite, offering warmth from lighting plus access to the office kitchen. Barricade spaces in gardens, under sheds and decking. Rats seek out shelter, particularly this time of year so minimise their options.

## 3. Portion control bird feed

Care for feathered friends at this time of year but keep a close eye on portion control to avoid unwanted guests at the bird table. Try to reduce the amount of seed that falls and consider taking short breaks from feeding the birds. The rats will soon clear off to seek out another food source, if their usual one becomes depleted.

## 4. Declutter inside and out

Look at your office, home and garden with a fresh pair of eyes – where would you hide if you were playing hide and seek with a rodent? The more clutter, the more places to hide and nest, so shift those boxes, pallets, garden debris to eradicate a rodent's potential hiding places.

## 5. Use a licensed pest control expert.

The treatments that accredited, licensed pest controllers use are more potent than off the shelf, domestic treatments, many of which rodents have become resistant to. Make sure whoever you use is ethical, humane and that they schedule return visits to ensure treatments are cleared up and carcasses disposed of.

Above all else, tackle the signs of an infestation early. Rats are clever. Learned behaviours and evolved resistance means they often outsmart average bait in a regular trap. But all is not lost. Once human activity in abandoned spaces increases, this could be enough to scare them off to squat elsewhere. In the meantime, to coin that iconic movie phrase from the 80s – “who ya gonna call?” Pest Controllers!