

Roof Rats

QUICK STATS:



Color:

Brown with black intermixed; gray, white or black underside



Shape:

Long and thin with scaly tail; large ears and eyes



Size:

6 – 8 inches not including the tail



Region:

Coastal states and the southern third of the U.S.



Roof Rats



Rattus rattus Linnaeus

OVERVIEW:

The roof rat – also called the black rat or ship rat – is smaller than the Norway rat but causes similar issues, including gnawing through materials, carrying diseases and contaminating food. The roof rat is thought to be of southeast Asian origin, but is now found throughout the world, especially in tropical regions.

HABITS:

Roof rats are primarily nocturnal. They live in colonies and prefer to nest in upper parts of structures or in trees. They forage for food in groups of up to ten and tend to return to the same food source time after time. Roof rats follow the same pathway between their nest and food. Their runways will be free of debris and may also have dark rub marks where their fur makes contact.

THREATS:

Historically, roof rats and their fleas have been associated with bubonic plague. Though transmission is rare today, there are still a handful of cases in the U.S. each year. Roof rats can also spread typhus, jaundice, rat-bite fever, trichinosis and salmonellosis. They can also carry fleas and mites.

PREVENTION:

- Fill any gaps or cracks on the outside of your home with silicone caulk. Roof rats can fit through openings as small as ½ inch, or the size of a quarter.
- Keep trees and shrubs trimmed away from the building and cut back limbs overhanging the roof.
- Clean up fruit that may fall from trees in the yard.
- Keep garbage in tightly covered receptacles.
- Regularly inspect your home and property for signs of an infestation, including rodent droppings, gnaw marks and damaged goods. Look for greasy rub marks caused by their oily fur.
- If you suspect a roof rat infestation, contact a licensed pest professional.

DID YOU KNOW? Roof rats...

- are good swimmers.
- are cautious and shy away from new objects and changes.
- and other rats' teeth continually grow. They gnaw to help file down their teeth.

For more information, visit PESTWORLD.org

