

Rodent control

Know your rodent



Fact sheet 1 of 4

Rodents are an ongoing and widespread concern for poultry industries, posing a risk to food safety and bird health.

Rodents can also be the cause of damage to farm infrastructure. To successfully control rodents on farm it is important to:

- Know which species of rodent you have
- Select rodenticides that are effective against your rodent species
- Use specific strategies that target your rodent species
- Document your rodent control program and track the level of rodent activity

Rodent identification

Correct identification of the rodent type will help you decide what control strategies to put in place.

The main types of rodents found on Australian poultry farms are the black rat, brown rat and house mouse. Each species has its own range, feeding and housing preference.

The following table outlines how each rodent species is different.



Common name	Black rat	Brown rat	House mouse
Scientific name	<i>Rattus rattus</i>	<i>Rattus norvegicus</i>	<i>Mus musculus</i>
Other common names	Roof rat, ship rat, fruit rat	Norway rat, sewer rat	Field mouse
Length (head+body)	150-220 mm	180-255 mm	60-90 mm
Length (tail)	180-250 mm	150-215 mm	80-100 mm
Fur and colour	Smooth and soft; black/grey/brown	Rough and shaggy; grey/brown	Sleek; brown/grey
Key identifying features	Thin, sleek body; thin, large and hairless ears; large eyes; pointed snout; tail longer than body	Stocky body; thick, opaque and fine haired ears; small eyes; blunt, rounded snout; tail shorter than body	Small body and scaly tail; large ears relative to body; small eyes; pointed snout
Droppings	Scattered; banana shaped with pointed ends	Grouped; capsule shaped with rounded ends	Scattered; pointed ends
	 7-14mm	 14-19mm	 4-7mm

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Chicken Meat



Common name	Black rat	Brown rat	House mouse
Habitat and behaviour	Nests in walls, roof cavities, vines and trees; agile climber; usually avoids unfamiliar objects and new foods. Activity in rafters and ceiling cavities is a good indication there are black rats	Nests in burrows; poor climber; avoids unfamiliar objects and new foods; hoards food for future consumption (including bait). Signs of burrows along the edges of sheds can indicate brown rats	Creates nests in shallow burrows or natural hollows and crevices; inquisitive of new objects and will try new food; good climber
Preferred diet	Fruits, nuts, grains and vegetables; food scraps, human waste, insects, small mammals, bird eggs and nestlings; eats 25-30 grams per day; requires fresh water. Will selectively eat animal feed instead of bait	Fruits, nuts, grains and vegetables; will eat human waste, insects, small mammals, bird eggs and nestlings; more likely to eat meat than the black rat, eats 30 grams per day; requires fresh water	Fruits, nuts, grains, vegetables, insects, bird eggs; consumes 3-5 grams per day; can survive without water (sufficient water from food). Will readily consume bait
Feeding range	Up to 30 metres	Up to 50 metres	Up to 35 metres
Reproduction	5-6 litters per year; 5-10 pups per litter	6 litters per year; 7-12 pups per litter	11 litters per year, 4-12 pups per litter

Table 1

Comparison of physical features and behavioural characteristics of *Rattus rattus*, *Rattus norvegicus* and *Mus musculus*, the three main rodent pest species in Australian poultry operations.

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Related information

- Rodent control manual
- Rodent control fact sheet series



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