

# Rodent control

## Brown rat control

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**The brown rat (*Rattus norvegicus*), also known as the Norway or sewer rat, is a common pest of poultry farms. It is located along the coastal areas of southern and eastern Australia, mainly in urban and agricultural areas.**

Rats are attracted to poultry farms as they are a good source of food, water and shelter. Understanding the feeding and nesting patterns of the different rodent types can help with designing appropriate control and management strategies.

#### Diet and feeding patterns

Brown rats are very intelligent animals, but are reluctant to investigate new and different objects. This can include bait stations, traps, and different food types (like bait). It may take a few days to over a week for brown rats to investigate new bait stations.

Their diet mostly consists of fruits, nuts, grains and vegetables, but they will also eat food scraps, insects, bird eggs and nestlings. Brown rats get water from their food, but they still need fresh water to survive. Brown rats can range up to 50 metres from their nest when searching for food.

#### Housing and nesting patterns

Brown rats do not like to climb and will burrow underground, often along the edge of poultry sheds. They use scavenged

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materials to build their nests and will hoard food (including bait).

#### Control and management strategies

Clean up rubbish and debris from around sheds that can provide shelter for rodents. Fill in potholes and areas where water can pool to reduce water availability.

Check the perimeter of each shed for signs of burrowing or other rat activity such as droppings. An effective way to prevent rats from burrowing next to sheds is to place road base, gravel or bitumen around the perimeter.

Place bait in secure bait stations around the entire shed and in other areas where rat activity is observed. Monitor bait intake and replenish when needed. Always secure bait inside the bait station. If not securely tied down, brown rats can remove the bait and scatter it around the farm.

Second-generation anticoagulant rodenticides such as brodifacoum, bromadiolone, difethialone and flocoumafen are the most suitable to use for brown rats.



Brown rats are brown or grey in colour with rough, shaggy fur. A key feature of the brown rat is that its tail is shorter than its body. If unsure which rodent you have, refer to the 'Know your rodent' fact sheet.

You can find more information about rodenticides and rodent control in the Rodent Control Manual.

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