

## **The Rats of Riverside Drive**

Rats are animals much like other animals. They are smart and establish patterns of behavior based on what they learn. They have basic needs like most creatures. They need to eat, procreate and raise their offspring. Although we see them with disgust they really have no interest in us other than to use our environment for comfort and to seek food. Society has made them into something bad while squirrels get by as cute. The end result is that we don't want them in our residence and don't even want to see them on the property.

### **History & Proximity -**

Every home is subject to the occasional rat or mouse. Weather extremes aggravate the problem. Everyone living on Riverside Dr. is at an increased risk of seeing rats due to the dense population, its close proximity to water and the type of construction. The rats seem to originate from the canal alongside I-10 which is infested with rats. The parish has received numerous complaints from the apartment managers without much happening in actual results. During good weather the rats are happy to live outdoors and eat what nature provides. When winter comes or even in the heat of summer they prefer to live indoors just like us.

All of the residential facilities on Riverside Dr. keep bait stations on the property and at this time all have pest control contracts. The hope is that any rats coming our way will notice the bait stations first and eat the poison before entering our buildings. Unfortunately, some will pass them by looking for a better deal.

Once inside they discover the luxury of living indoors with heat in the winter and air conditioning in the summer along with plenty of food and water for the taking. Once they are inside they don't want to leave and we can't just evict them. They live & have their babies in the walls of the buildings. Once in the walls they have free access to the entire building. Because of this, it is a common element or facility problem. While each unit is individually owned only the condo office has the ability to treat the entire building. Ultimately the solution rests with the occupants, the condominium association, it's pest control contractor and the passage of time.

### **Why me -**

We live in close proximity to a high rat population. What can we do to reduce our chances of having them in our home? We must remember rats do not come to live among us to make friends. We normally see rats when they are looking for food. Remember rats have choices where they roam. The best way not to invite them into our homes is to make sure they have nothing to eat.

### **Prevention -**

Rats have an excellent sense of smell and love people food. They don't understand our system of eating from a plate so any food left available is like inviting them to dine with you. Never leave dirty dishes in the sink - put them in the dishwasher where they are not accessible. Don't leave the sink with standing water - they need that too. Keep fresh produce in the refrigerator where it will keep fresh longer and not be available for the taking. Other produce, dry goods like grains, beans etc. should be kept in containers. Nice see through shoe box size containers are readily available at the dollar store. They have other sizes as well at very cheap prices. Make sure

... continued

tables, chairs and the floor don't have any food smears. Put kitchen garbage in a can with a good lid they can't open to help themselves. Rats love to come out at night and finish off whatever is left behind and always return to where they found their last meal. Without exception, take out the garbage every evening after cleaning up from the last meal of the day. Never leave garbage outside - this is like advertising for them to come eat at your place.

### **Pets -**

Pets increase the likelihood of rats on the property. They eat at floor level and will always spill some food or crumbs. Cats are probably the worst because they eat a little at a time always leaving some food in the bowl.

### **Treatment Methods (death) -**

So we have rats, what do we do now. There are just a couple of ways to get rid of rats. Unfortunately the only thing that works is to kill them. First of all, don't set the table for them, we want them to take the bait and they will prefer people food over the bait.

Rats have claws that easily dig through sheetrock so closing holes have little effect, they simply make new ones. We also want them to be able to access the traps & poisonous bait in order to get rid of them.

There are two systems of baiting - traps & poison disguised as food. Traps are the preferred method. It's gross because we need to dispose of a smashed rat. The good part is that it is done with. Traps can not be used in the presence of children because the force of the trap will break a finger or worse. Poison is the treatment of last resort because the poor rat suffers while waiting for death. Rats love high quality poison and eat it with gusto and often bring back a chunk to their nest for their family to eat as food.

Rat poison must never be left where children or pets can get to it because it will kill them too. If you suspect that a child or pet has ingested rat poison call the poison control hot line for advice or go to the nearest emergency room.

### **Results -**

So here comes the big problem with poison. Now we have a dead rat often in the wall or ceiling somewhere in the building. Your rat/s may even go to someone else's apartment to die - remember once inside the walls they have free run of the entire building. Dead animals smell, rats included. We can't just start tearing out walls, cabinetry and ceilings hunting for where the rat died because besides the damage, you need those walls, cabinets and ceilings to live your life.

Fortunately or unfortunately depending on how you look at it nature has a way of dealing with dead things. Insects and flies eat too and know that dead smell means a feast. When they have finished off the rat and there is nothing else to eat they simply leave looking for their next meal elsewhere. Our problem is while this is going on it can get really nasty. The smell and hundreds of flies can be hard to take but in a couple of weeks it will taper off and things will begin to return to normal.

Just because you have gotten rid of your rat remember that more may come without practicing prevention.