

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Due to a recent uptick in rodent sightings the Department of Public Health and Safety is issuing an urgent request for residents to stop any/all feeding of wildlife including but not limited to birds and squirrels.

Sightings have been Village-wide and random. Two recent outbreaks were directly attributed to ground feeding. Bird feeders often have loose seed the ends up on the ground as well.

Residents are encouraged to take the following actions:

- Cease all outdoor feeding activity.
- Audit your home to look for ground disturbances (burrows). If a burrow is identified residents can contact DPHS at 708-615-6276 and request treatment(s) by the Village contract exterminator Smithereen. Residents are provided with 3 services calls for \$150. The Village will not bait on private property.
- Harborage conformation can be achieved by pushing dirt over any suspicious hole. The location is then checked 24 hours later and if ground disturbance is present there is harborage at that location. This should not be repeated and under no circumstance should resident introduce poison/bait directly in to the burrow.
- Clear weeds and ground clutter from between garage. Likewise, accumulations of stored items such as ladders, firewood etc. should be removed. Garage slabs are the most prevalent source of harborage.
- Ensure garbage totes are kept and closed and avoid overflow. If a container has holes in the lid contact the Clerks Office and a replacement toter will be requested.

Simply calling DPHS and saying “I saw a rat in my alley” is not enough information for the department to adequately address any infestation. Rats need 3 things to survive. Food, harborage and water. In residential neighborhoods harborage is located 100% on private property. Food sources are also resident generated therefore individual stewardship of private lots is the only way to mitigate infestations.

As always DPHS staff and happy to address residents questions at 708-615-6276 or building@forestpark.net.

Rats in Our Community

In communities like Forest Park, rats often become established near homes and businesses. Rat populations can grow quickly when conditions are favorable.

Where rats live depends on how and where **WE** live. A site with no food or shelter will usually be avoided by rats. Is your property likely to be attractive to rats?

An Unwelcome Guest

The rat most likely to be found here is the Norway rat, which is husky and covered with coarse brownish-gray fur, except for the tail which is nearly hairless. It weighs about 11 ounces and is generally 13-18 inches long, including the 6-8 inch tail.

Rats maintain their teeth by gnawing. They cause property damage when they chew on wood and wires. They are nocturnal and can be seen at dusk and night.

They will climb and swim to find food and shelter, and can gain entrance to buildings through any opening larger than ½ inch across.



Norway Rat

Rats Need Food and Water

Rats will eat nearly any type of food, but they prefer meat and grains. *They will even eat pet waste!* They require water when feeding on dry food.

- Keep garbage in trash cans and dumpsters. Close the lids tightly. Rats can easily chew through plastic bags.
- Rinse cans and bottles before you put them into the recycling bin.
- If you feed pets outside, remove the food dish after the meal and collect pet feces daily. Cleaning feces in the evening makes this food source unavailable to the rats to feed on overnight.
- Feeding birds and squirrels can attract rats. Do not throw bird food on the ground. Use feeders and regularly rake up and remove spilled seeds.

Rats Need Shelter

Rats live outdoors and indoors – in walls, attics and basements, or under porches, crawl spaces, and sheds. They often enter buildings where gas or electric lines pass through walls, behind gutters and through damaged or missing window screens. To keep out rats, check these areas for holes and make repairs using sturdy materials. Rats are good climbers so trim tree limbs away from buildings.

Rats will often dig their homes. A rat burrow is a tunnel in which a rat constructs its nest.

Recognizing Rat Infestations

The presence of rats can be detected by droppings or signs of fresh gnawing. Tracks can be seen in mud and on dusty surfaces.

Burrows may be found at building foundations, under steps, sidewalks, low vegetation/shrubs, and debris. Freshly dug burrows have an entrance about 2 inches wide with a mound of soil next to the hole. The soil and vegetation by burrows flattens into paths.

Burrows under dense vegetation may be hard to find. It is helpful to cut back vegetation of all types around trashcans and other food sources. Regular mowing discourages rats and exposes burrows.

Mice

People often confuse rats with mice. Mice are gray and brown like rats, but are not as husky. They have small ears and eyes, relative to the body. A mouse weighs ½ ounce and is about 5-7 inches long, including the 3-4 inch tail.

Mouse nests are made from shredded paper or other fibrous material and are often found in sheltered locations. House mice have a musty odor that identifies their presence and can be seen during daylight hours.



House Mouse

We Can Fight Back!

Making your property rat resistant is the best way to avoid living with rats. Each month, take a few minutes to make an inspection of your property. Look more often in the spring and fall when rats are more prevalent.

If you have a rat problem, your neighbor probably does too. Work together to share information and offer to lend a hand. Rat management can be successful only if performed over property lines.

Forest Park's Extermination Program

The Village of Forest Park has contracted with Smithereen Pest Control to set tamper resistant bait stations in the alleys in the affected neighborhoods and monitors them regularly. To make the program is effective, the Village needs your help.

- Do not remove or tamper with bait stations.
- Keep children and pets away from bait stations.

**If you see a rat or a damaged bait station contact the Village at
708-615-6285**

Tell the staff member the address of the sighting or damaged station and as much specific information as possible. This will help us determine the extent and location of the infestation.

10 Ways to Control Rats

1. **Look for rat activity and food sources each month. Take action right away before things get worse.**
2. **Store trash in rat resistant totes and dumpsters.**
3. **Rinse cans and bottles for recycling.**
4. **Eliminate rodent hiding places such as tall grass, weeds and other ground covering vegetation. Wood piles, lumber, litter, old boxes, and junk in the yard must also be eliminated.**
5. **Immediately clean up after pets in the yard.**
6. **Remove pet food from the garage and store in heavy duty, tight closing containers.**
7. **Clean bird feeders weekly and rake up bird food on the ground.**
8. **Weatherize your home. Seal all possible pet entry points.**
9. **Cooperate with your neighbors.**
10. **Contact the Village of Forest Park when you see a rat or a damaged bait station.**

Rats in Our Community

We Can Control and Prevent Rats if We Work Together



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Department of Public Health
And Safety
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708-615-6285