

Rats, mice - what's the difference?

To many people and cultures rats and mice are seen as the same animal, mice are thought to be young rats. In some languages there is only one word for both animals – rat.

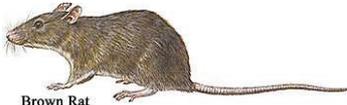
However, this is not the case they are distinctly different animals, with their own life cycles, habitats, health issues etc. This document is intended to help you identify which of the two you have seen or have in your home.

Although there are a number of rat and mouse species the two most likely to be seen in and around the home are the common rat also known as the Norway rat, the Brown rat or Sewer rat. Mice are usually the House mouse, but sometimes

field mice are seen as well. Most sightings of rodents in the home, almost 95%, are mice.

It is important to identify which you have in your home or garden as the treatments differ and the advice and help we give will also differ. For example we do not treat mice outside, but we will for rats. Rats can often be a symptom of another problem i.e. a drainage defect and we can advise accordingly. Proofing advice to stop the rodents getting in may also vary greatly.

The table below highlights the main differences between the two:

	 <p>Brown Rat</p>	
ADULT WEIGHT :	300 grams (11 ounces)	15 grams (half an ounce)
LENGTH: (head & body)	200-250 mm (8-10 inches)	60-90 mm (2-4 inches)
LENGTH: (tail)	150-200 mm (6-8 inches)	80-100 mm (3-5 inches)
TOTAL LENGTH:	350-450 mm (14-18 inches)	140-190 mm (5-9 inches)
FUR COLOUR:	Brown to black on upper head and body, lighter undersides	Brownish grey, but lighter shades do occur
EARS:	Thick, opaque, small relative to the overall head size and covered in fine hairs	Large relative to the head
HEAD AND SNOUT:	Heavy blunt and chunky	small and sharply triangular with pointed muzzles
TAIL:	Shorter than body, thick and heavy	Longer than the body, thin
EYES:	Small	Large and prominent
DROPPINGS:	Usually found in groups, spindle shaped, about 20mm (3 quarters of an inch)	Scattered, rod shaped, 3-6 mm(eighth to 2 eighths of an inch)

HABITS:	Can be found indoors, outdoors and in sewers. Active burrowers, leaving approx 10cm (4 inch) holes. Tunneling can be very extensive. Not agile climbers. Territorial range 50-100 metres (55-110 yards)	Lives indoors and out, but almost unknown in the sewers. Sometimes burrows. Climbs well. Territorial range 1.5-5 metres (1.5-5.5 yards)
FEEDING:	Omnivorous – eats almost anything including meat. Needs to drink water regularly. Consumes up to 30 grams per day (just over 1 ounce).	Nibbles. Prefers cereals (but will eat a wide variety of foods). Can survive without water gets all it requires from its food. Consumes 3 grams per day (0.1 of an ounce)
LIFE CYCLE:	Lives 9-18 months. Sexually active from 2-3 months. Has 8-10 young in up to 7 times a year.	Lives 9-12 months. Sexually active from 6 weeks. Has 5-6 young in up to 8 litters per year.

Young rats are often mistaken for mice and visa versa. Most of the differences between the two shown above still apply as well as, young, weaned rats are still larger than adult mice, weighing around 100 grams (3.5 ounces) at six weeks. Here's what to look for: baby rats will have more juvenile proportions than adult mice. Their heads and feet will be large relative to their bodies, their faces will be stubby and blunt with wide noses. Adult mice, on the other hand, will have adult proportions: a small, triangular head with a small nose and little delicate feet as compared to the body.

Other than a brief sighting most people's realization that they have a rodent problem comes when they start finding droppings. These will often be used as the main way of telling rats and mice apart. You will be asked about their size (see above), but the easiest way is to equate them to everyday objects:

- Mouse droppings are very much like grains of rice in size and shape, but will generally be black. They can be found in quite large numbers and generally scattered. A mouse with access to adequate food can defecate every 10 minutes.
- Rats droppings have been likened to black (although the colour may vary) baked beans, raisins or jelly babies. They can be scattered, but usually found in groups.

This picture helps to further show the difference in size:



Once you have ascertained which one of these two rodents you have on or in your property you can contact Callpoint on 020 8314 7171 to either make an appointment or for further advice about treating the problem yourself.