



Rodents

There are approximately 60 native species in Australia including the well-known Water Rat, Bush Rat and Stick-nest Rats.

All Australian rodents belong to the single family, Muridae. The three pest species belong to the subfamily, Murinae. It is not uncommon for native species such as bush rats and various species of mice to be found in people's backyards, so it is imperative that you can identify the animal's species before undertaking a control program.

Impact of rodents

Rats and mice create food spoilage, contamination and the transmission of diseases to humans. The most common disease transmitted by rats is Salmonellosis, which is spread when food consumed by humans has been contaminated by excreta or saliva of rats.

Physical damage caused by gnawing can sometimes lead to costly fires. Rodents' habitats include holes and burrows in the ground and any place where food and shelter are within reasonable range. Indoors, they may construct nests in wall voids, in roof voids, under floors and even within stored food packaging.

Roof Rat, *Rattus rattus* (introduced)

- Body length 190-millimetres, tail length 230-millimetres, weight 280-grams.
- Sleek-looking, any colour from black to white, but generally steel-grey with a white belly, tail much longer than the head and body.
- When pulled forward, the ears extend past the middle of the eyes.
- Occurs anywhere around human habitation — in ceilings, dumps, gardens, shops, warehouses, fowl houses and degraded habitats.
- Nocturnal by nature. Accomplished climber, rarely seen on the ground. Surprisingly gentle disposition.

Sewer Rat, *Rattus norvegicus* (introduced)

- Body length 240-millimetres, tail length 200-millimetres, weight 300-grams.
- Shaggy fur, colour varies from black to white, but is generally brown on the back and dirty white on belly, thick tail.
- Small ears, when pulled forward the ears just reach the eyes.
- Found around human habitation, in particular wharves, warehouses, tunnels, drains and sewers.
- Nocturnal by nature. Non-climbing, digs burrows. Feeds on meat (insects, prawns, birds, eggs, mice) and scraps.

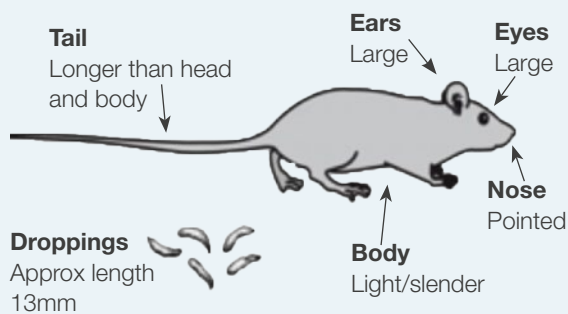
House Mouse, *Mus musculus* (introduced)

- Body length 75-millimetres, tail length 80-millimetres, weight 15-grams.
- Usually olive-brown, strong musky-mouldy scent.
- Small notch on inner side of both large upper incisors.
- A major pest in food storage, urban, industrial and agricultural environments. Found Australia-wide.
- Primarily nocturnal. Feed at multiple sites, often 20-30 different sites each day taking a small amount of food at each.

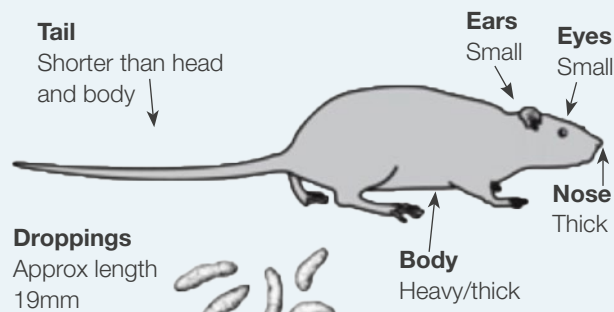
Water Mouse, *Xeromys myoides* (native)

- Body length 300-millimetres, tail length 270-millimetres, weight 700-grams.
- Large (rabbit-sized), brown-black back, golden belly, small ears, flattish 'square' head, white-tipped tail.
- Found at river banks, estuaries, beaches, mangroves, wharves, lakes, dams, creeks and polluted watercourses.
- Active day or night. Eats mainly yabbies, mussels and fish, although poultry, frogs and snails may be taken.
- Builds a nest at the end of a complex burrow along the waterside.

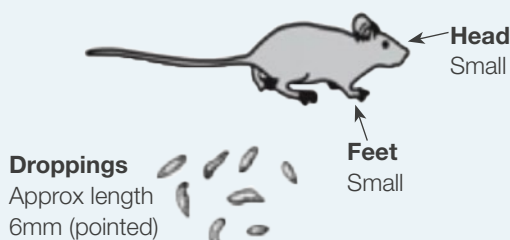
Roof Rat *Rattus Rattus* (introduced)



Sewer Rat *Rattus norvegicus* (introduced)



House Mouse *Mus musculus* (introduced)



Water Rat, *Hydromys chrysogaster* (native)

- Other names: False Water Rat.
- Body length 100-millimetres, tail length 80-millimetres, weight 40-grams.
- Small, size of a large mouse, silky, slate-grey back and pure white belly, short tail with sparse hairs, lacks white tip, white spots on backs of adults.
- Found adjacent to mangrove forests, also freshwater swamps and reedy lakes close to dunes.
- Active at night. Eats crabs, shellfish, mud lobsters and marine flatworms.
- Constructs mounds of peat and mud up to 60-centimetres high.
- Rarely climbs, has been seen swimming in the wild.

Interesting facts

Rodents eat almost anything, including meat, grain, eggs, fruit and vegetables, wax candles, soap, caged birds and sometimes their own young. Rats are extremely sensitive to their surroundings and tend to avoid new objects placed in their territory. Rodents have poor eyesight but have highly developed senses of hearing, touch, scent and taste.

Useful tips

- Place all food wastes in an approved refuse container with a close-fitting lid.
- Keep houses and warehouses dry to deny rodents access to water.
- Close openings around all pipes entering building.
- Cover basement windows and opening under building with wire or fine mesh.

Setting traps and baits

- Remember to read the rodenticide label before placing the bait.
- Place baits where rats and mice will find it.
- Fix break-back traps on rat runs so the rat must step on the trigger.
- Leave unset for several nights beforehand so that the rodents may become accustomed to the presence of the trap.
- Attractive bait should be securely fastened to the trigger.
- Keep up a fresh supply of bait and remove any spoiled or rancid baits.

For more information

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