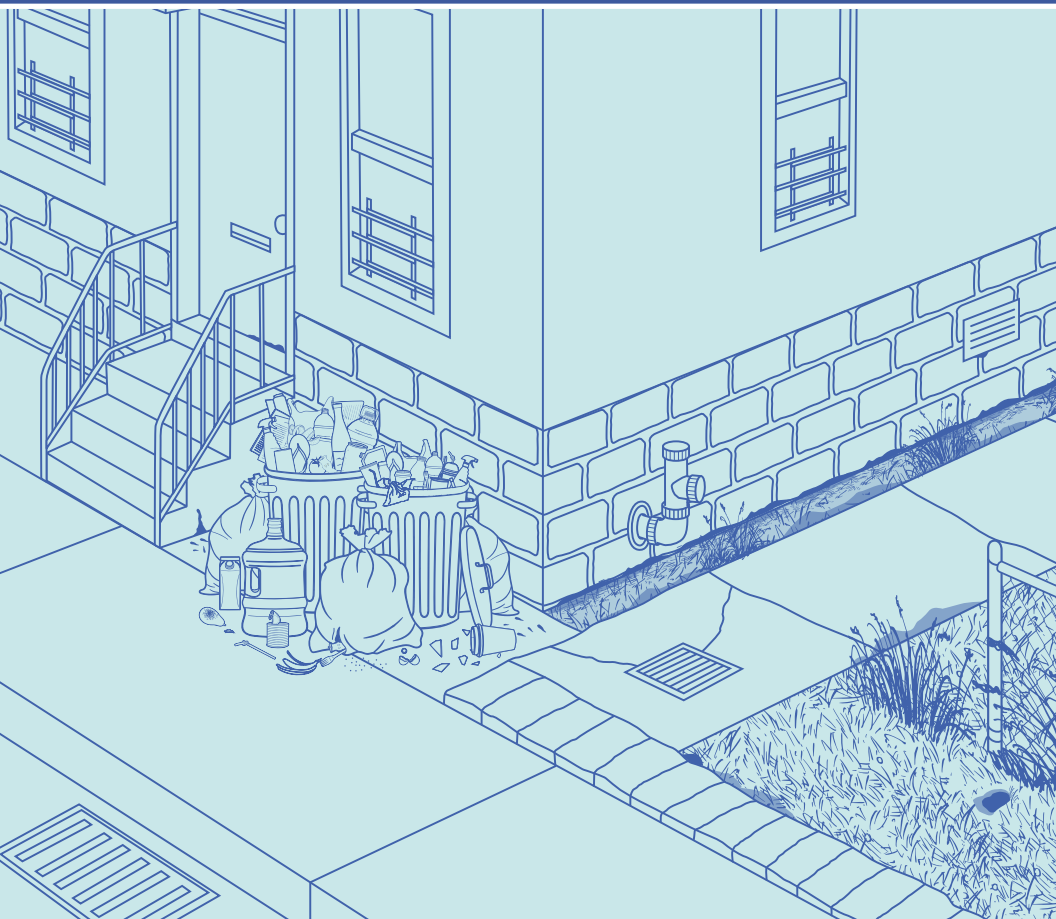











# Preventing Rats on Your Property

A Guide for Property Owners and Managers





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## Take an Active Role Against Rats

**Rats can damage property, contaminate food, spread disease and reduce quality of life in your neighborhood. You and your neighbors can decrease rat activity by removing what rats need to survive: food, water, shelter and ways to get around.**

If you have rats on your property or received a Commissioner's Order from the New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (NYC Health Department) saying you do:

1. Follow this guide and hire a pest control company.
2. Show the pest control company this guide and ask them to use it.
3. Share this guide with your neighbors, tenants and property managers. Call **311** to order more copies.



## How the NYC Health Department Inspects for Rats

The NYC Health Department inspects private and public properties for rats. Property owners must keep their properties free of rats by law. If they fail to do so, tenants can call **311** and the NYC Health Department will send an inspector to the property. The NYC Health Department also does routine proactive inspections of properties in neighborhoods throughout NYC. A property will fail the inspection if any of the following are found:

- Live rats
- Rat droppings
- Burrows (places where rats live)
- Gnaw marks from rats' teeth
- Tracks or runways, such as rub marks or flattened paths outside burrows
- Excessive garbage or clutter that gives rats a place to hide

Property owners who fail an inspection will receive a Commissioner's Order and copy of the inspection report in the mail. The NYC Health Department will reinspect after giving the owner time to address the issues. If the property fails a second inspection, the owner may receive a summons, which could result in fines. Depending on how severe the issues are, the NYC Health Department may treat the property with rodenticide and bill the owner.

# How To Control Rats

Rats are most active at night. Look for them after sunset to find out where they go to find food. When it gets light out, check for signs of rat activity, including:



## Look for Rat Activity

1 Gnaw marks on wooden surfaces

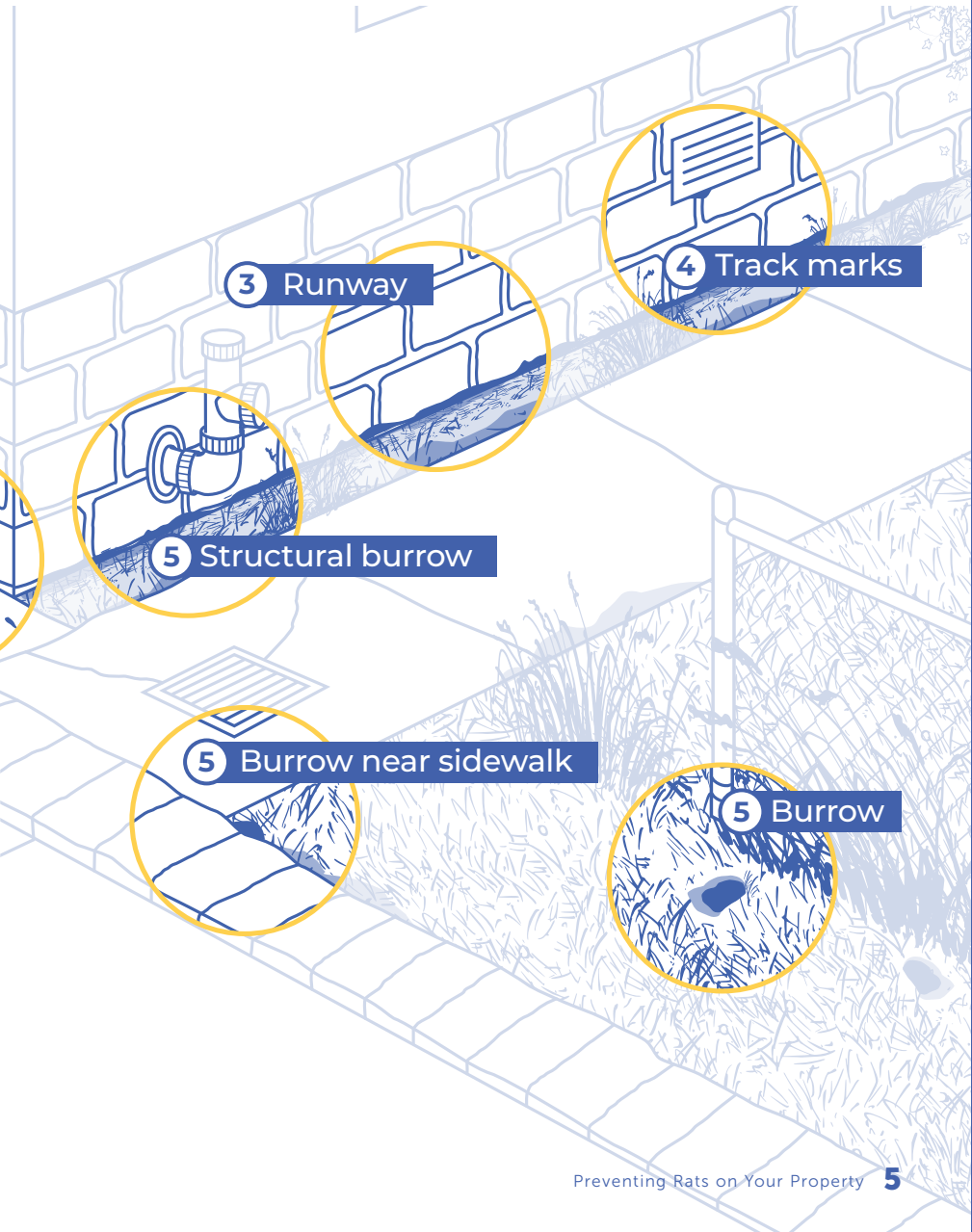
2 Rat droppings

1 Gnaw marks on trash bags

2 Rat droppings

1. **Gnaw marks** on wooden surfaces (such as bases of doors and stairs), building edges and plastic items (such as garbage cans, bags and flowerpots)
2. **Rat droppings**, which are different in size and shape from mouse droppings, about the size of a raisin, dark brown, and often found close to garbage
- 3., 4. **Runways** and **track marks** along grass and walls
5. **Burrows**: 1- to 4-inch holes in dirt or concrete, with smooth edges, often with an entrance and exit, and often found under bushes, plants, clutter or garbage

To control rats, you have to remove everything they need to survive: food, water, shelter and ways to get around.





## Clean Up

### Wash Away Rat Droppings, Urine and Track Marks

Rats communicate and attract each other through urine and droppings. Cleaning up will disrupt their communication.

- Remove droppings and dark, greasy track marks, clean the area, and wash it with water and a mild bleach solution (1 part bleach and 10 parts water).
- Clean up food grease and liquids.
- Remove rat droppings indoors using a vacuum with a HEPA filter. Seal the vacuum bag in plastic and throw it out with your regular trash.
- Always wear gloves while and wash your hands after cleaning.



### Get Rid of Clutter

Clutter gives rats many places to hide, sleep, nest and reproduce.

- Remove and recycle piles of newspapers, paper bags, cardboard and bottles.
- Clean out your basement, storage areas and yard.
- Store items away from walls and off the ground.



## Control Weeds, Shrubs and Bushes

Rats often burrow under dense bushes and plants. Check your garden frequently for rat activity.

- Keep green spaces free of weeds, clutter and trash.
- Make space between plants. Avoid dense, low-lying planting.
- Keep tall grass, bushes and shrubs away from building foundations. Use pebbles or wood chips to create an area around the building and fence.
- Remove dense planting around burrows.
- Always wear gloves while and wash your hands after working in your garden.



## Starve Rats Out

**Rats only need 1 ounce of water and 1 ounce of food each day. Remove any pooled water and do not make your garbage their food.**

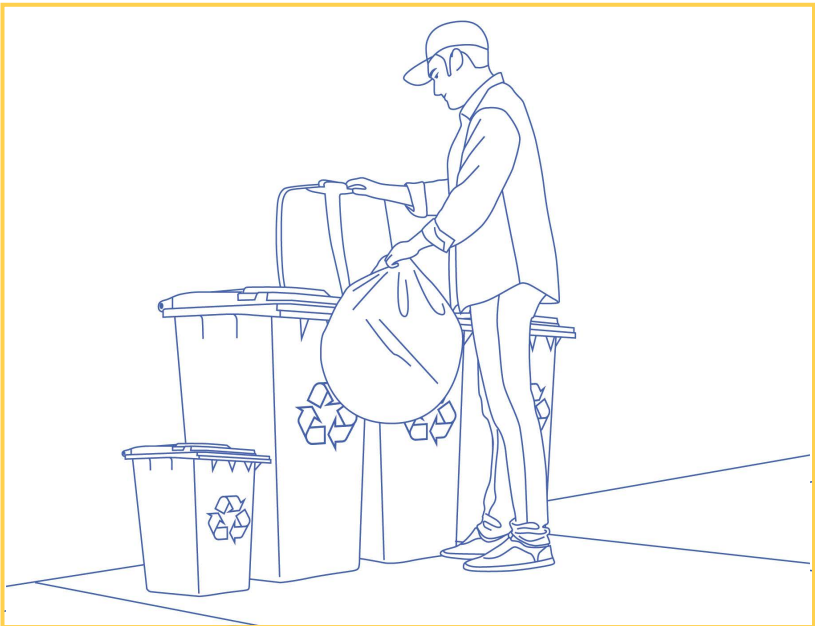
## Manage Your Garbage

- Use hard plastic or metal cans with tight-fitting lids and no cracks or holes.
- Make sure you have enough garbage containers to hold all trash between pickups. Clean them often inside and out.

- Bring garbage to the curb as close to pickup time as possible.
- Never place garbage on street tree pits or earthen areas.
- Rinse recyclables before placing them in designated bins.
- Encourage tenants to put garbage in designated bins.
- Consider curbside composting.

## Keep Food Away

- Keep all food in tightly sealed containers. Avoid storing food (including pet food) outside.
- Do not put food out for stray cats, birds or squirrels, as it can attract and feed rats.
- Remove any pooled water.



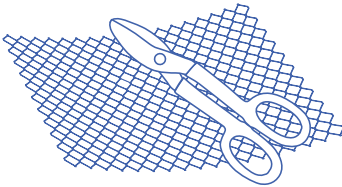


## Keep Rats Out

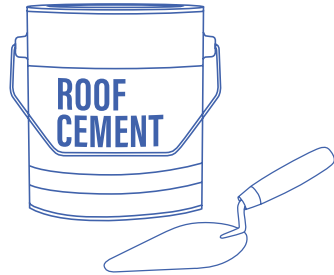
Rats gnaw holes into buildings and can squeeze through cracks and holes as small as one-half inch. To keep rats out, seal all holes and cracks in foundations, walls and floors. Seal spaces underneath doors and around windows. Most repairs can be done by maintenance staff, superintendents or pest control professionals. Pest-proof supplies are inexpensive and available at most hardware stores.

Hire a licensed pest professional to treat your building if you have rats. However, if possible, it is best to prevent rats from getting into your building in the first place.

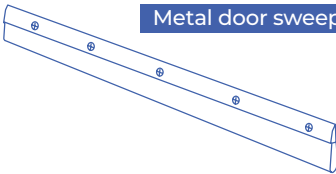
Tin snips and hardware cloth



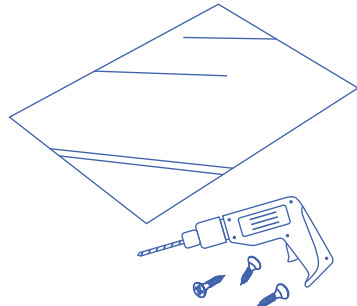
Roof cement and trowel



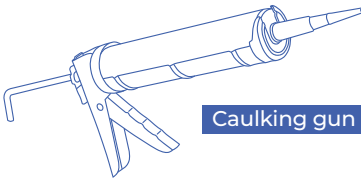
Metal door sweeps



Sheet metal and drill

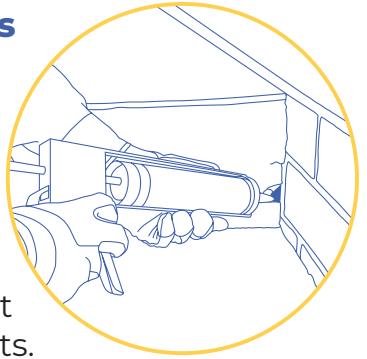


Caulking gun



## Seal Cracks and Small Holes

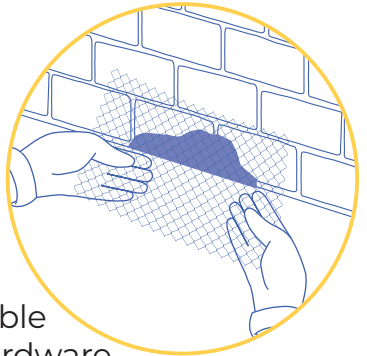
- Seal cracks and small holes using construction-grade 1A polyurethane sealant or roofing cement. Avoid using inexpensive caulking compounds meant for minor repairs, as they are not strong enough to prevent rats.
- Close gaps under doors with rodent-resistant metal door sweeps. The space between the bottom of the door and floor should be less than one-quarter inch.
- Close gaps larger than one-half inch in ground floor and basement window frames with metal flashing.
- Put screens on vents, especially on lower floors.



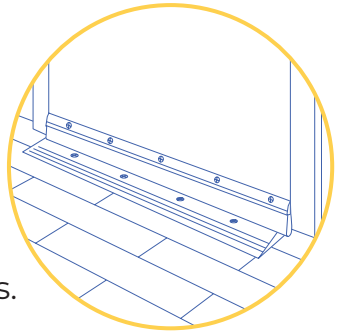
## Fill Large Gaps and Holes

The way to close large gaps and holes depends on the building material and amount of space behind the hole.

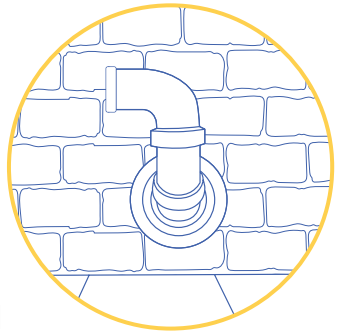
- To close a large hole, first fill it with high-density expandable foam from cans or wedge hardware cloth into it. Then, apply construction-grade 1A polyurethane sealant, ready-mix cement patches or mixed mortar.
  - If using hardware cloth, it must be heavy-duty, 16-gauge galvanized steel with a one-half-inch mesh size. Never use chicken wire, as rats can squeeze through the openings.



- Cover floor drains and vents with heavy-duty metal screening, secured with masonry nails or cement.
- Use rodent-proof door sweeps to keep gaps under doors smaller than one-quarter inch. Do not use vinyl weather stripping, as it is used to prevent cool or warm air movements, not rats.



- Seal all pipes and cables that lead into a foundation or an exterior wall with escutcheon plates (or “pipe collars”). Escutcheon plates can be sealed to the wall with construction-grade 1A polyurethane sealant. Check pipes for leaks regularly.



- If rats are highly active around your property, work with a professional to install:

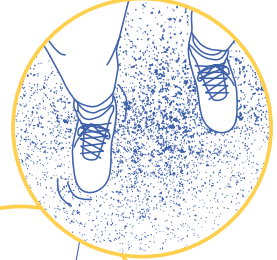
- Sheet metal kickplates on the lower exterior of doors to prevent rats from gnawing through the wood base and entering underneath
- A heavy-duty metal saddle threshold underneath doors so they fit snugly but can still be opened and closed smoothly



## Close Inactive Burrows

Inactive burrows will often have leaves, cobwebs or other debris around the entrance. Close them, as they will attract rats and other pests over time.

- Close burrows in soil by filling them with sand or gravel and strongly tamping down with a shovel, stepping on them or collapsing them with a shovel.
- Close burrows in cracked or broken sidewalks by filling them with stainless steel rodent-proofing mesh fabric. Then, cover with well-mixed cement.



## Targeted Treatment

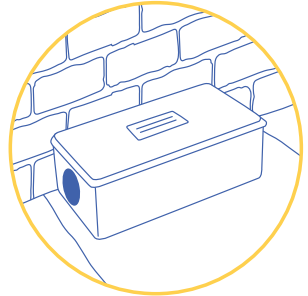
There are many ways to treat rats. Work with a pest professional to find the option that works best for you and your property.

## Rodent Baiting

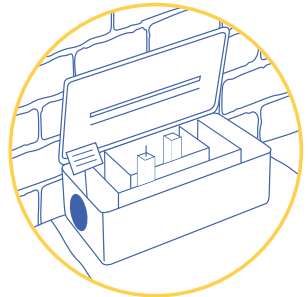
Rodent bait is an effective way to eliminate rats. If you own a commercial or multiunit property, it is illegal to place rodent bait yourself — you must hire a pest professional. If you live in your own home without tenants, you can place rodent bait yourself. Always read and follow the manufacturer's label to avoid harming yourself, others and pets.

## Make sure your pest control company follows these guidelines:

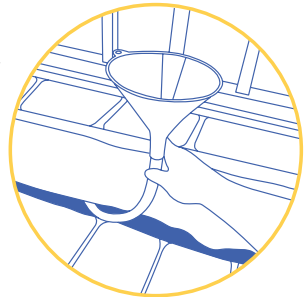
- Always read and follow the manufacturer's label, and use the smallest effective amount of bait.
- Use disposable gloves when handling bait and wash hands after.
- Use secured bait blocks or bait sachets inside tamper-resistant bait stations. **Do not scatter bait or use packets or loose bait.** Bait should be placed in the feeding chamber, not in the runway or entryways of the bait station. Secure or anchor bait stations to the ground or fence with cement, caulk or wire.



- Securely lock bait station lids or fasten them shut. Rodent bait must be in sturdy Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)-approved tamper-resistant bait stations.



- Place bait stations on paths that rats normally travel on.
- Use a funnel to place loose pellet bait into burrows. This will help ensure pellets are placed deep into the burrow so rats cannot push them out. Bait blocks and soft bait sachets cannot be placed into the ground.



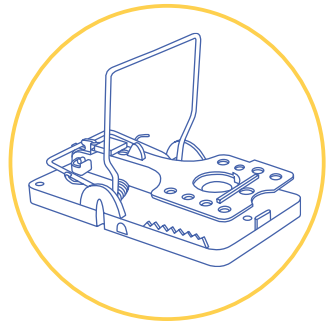
— Never bag bait or place it in burrows or stations. Rats can push or carry it out to where wildlife, children or pets can get to it.

- **Always clean up trash and other food sources. Rats will ignore bait if their normal food supply is available.**

- Store and place bait stations where children and pets cannot get to them.
- Never use a product that does not have an EPA registration number. You can check a product's registration status at [epa.gov](https://www.epa.gov).
- Replace bait after it has been eaten or damaged.
- Leave bait stations and bait in place for at least two weeks after all rat activity has stopped, then monitor monthly.
- Only use tracking powder where people or animals will not be exposed to it.

## Other Treatment Methods

- **Traps:** There are many types of traps available for purchase. Traps should be placed along rats' travel paths, monitored daily and reused. Trapping will not be effective if food sources are not removed.



- **Carbon dioxide and carbon monoxide:** These treatments can be used in planted areas and gardens in earthen burrow systems away from structures. They have the advantage of reducing the risk of secondary poisoning and are more sustainable than other types of treatment.



For more information about pesticides, call the National Pesticide Information Center at 800-858-7378.

If you, someone else or a pet are exposed to rat bait, call the NYC Poison Center at 212-POISONS (212-764-7667).



## Choosing and Working With a Pest Control Company

**Only professionals licensed by New York State (NYS) can apply pesticides in commercial and multiunit buildings and public spaces in New York. There are more than 1,000 pest control companies and 3,500 licensed pest professionals in the NYC area, but not all are well trained in managing rats. To get rid of rats, you must choose the right company, be clear about what you want done and monitor how they do.**

### How To Find the Right Company

#### Ask Around and Interview Companies

- Ask your neighbors and friends for referrals. If your building has rats, nearby buildings may as well. Consider working with your neighbors to hire the same pest control company.
- Look online for integrated pest management services. These companies are more likely to inspect, monitor, and make recommendations and repairs.
- Interview companies. Ask for references, including previous customers.

- Make sure the company is licensed with the NYS Department of Environmental Conservation. To check, visit **dec.ny.gov** and search for **pesticides management**.

### **A good company will:**

- Inspect your property before giving you a price quote. Do not accept a quote without the company first seeing your property.
- Give you a written inspection report (with information on rodent activity, building conditions or problems that need repairs) and an action plan (with a timeline and description of products they will use). The company should tell you what you can expect and how to best work with them.
- Base quotes on inspection findings, not flat fees. The cheapest services may not be the best — you may pay more over time if the services are not effective.
- Make referrals for structural repairs, if required.
- Use a variety of products and methods to eliminate your pest problem.
- Visit often until the job is done. Treatment programs usually take multiple visits to complete.
- Put bait in tamper-resistant containers and follow all safety regulations.
- Employ qualified, well-trained exterminators.
- Educate you on how to prevent rats.

## Work Together

The best long-term rat prevention programs require a strong partnership, which can help you identify needed repairs and report signs of rat activity over time:

- Monitor your pest professional during each visit, keep track of their work and ask them questions.
- Agree on a service plan and cost.
- Ask your pest professional for progress reports, copies of treatment records and any concerns they have.
- Follow up on referrals and recommendations.

To learn more and see inspection findings on our interactive rat map, visit the Rat Information Portal at **[nyc.gov/rats](https://nyc.gov/rats)**. You can also email **[ratportal@health.nyc.gov](mailto:ratportal@health.nyc.gov)** or call **311** for information. To register for a Rat Academy training, visit **[nyc.gov/health](https://nyc.gov/health)** and search for **rat academy** or scan the QR code.

