

Norway Rat and Roof Rat Communication Plan

Introduction

This plan provides guidance on two invasive species of rats, regulated pests in Saskatchewan, to appointed pest control officers (PCOs), municipalities (as defined in *The Municipalities Act*, *The Cities Act*, and *The Northern Municipalities Act, 2010*), owners or occupants of land, industry stakeholders, producer groups and the public. It outlines key information on detection, regulatory guidelines, management practices, and a response plan.

Legislative Authority

- [The Plant Health Act](#)
- [The Plant Health Regulations](#)

Overview

Norway rat or brown rat (*Rattus norvegicus*) and roof rat, black rat or ship rat (*Rattus rattus*) are two invasive species that can be very destructive if populations are not eradicated or controlled, thus they represent a threat to the agricultural industry. The Norway rat is the most common species of rat found in the Canadian Prairies. These rats can cause significant economic damage to stored crops and grains through consumption, contamination with droppings and urine and gnawing on storage facilities. Rats can also spread diseases to livestock and humans, for example Toxoplasmosis. They can reproduce rapidly and adapt easily which can lead to damaging infestation. Norway rats like to live at or near ground level while roof rats are good climbers that prefer to shelter higher up in buildings.

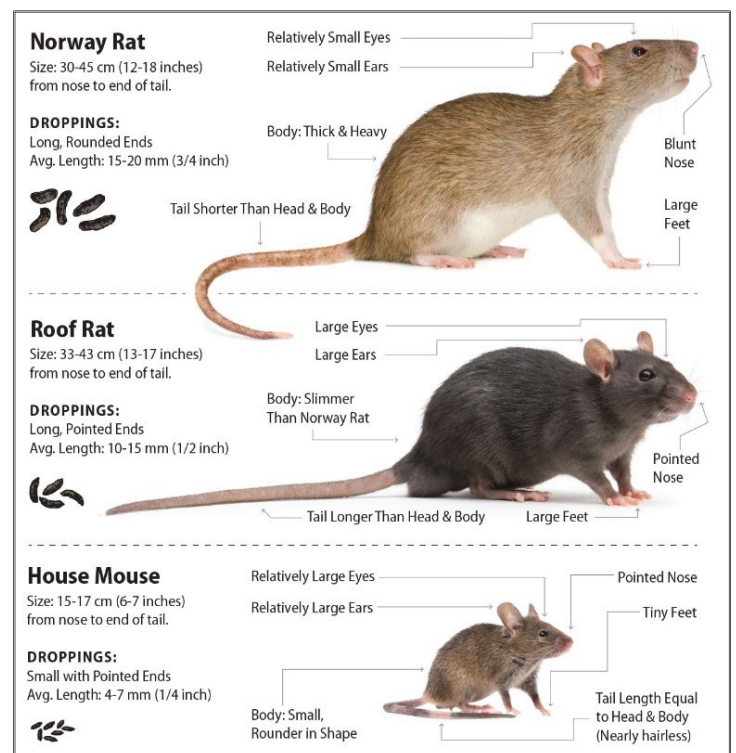


Figure 1. Comparison of invasive rats and house mouse

Photo credit: Government of British Columbia

Spread and Control

Rats are found where there is access to food, water and shelter, such as in man-made environments like crop and grain facilities, poultry and livestock shelters, under bale stacks, sheds and garbage sites. This is why it is important to prevent access.

The Ministry of Agriculture has funded rat control management efforts in the province since the 1970s. These efforts have led to a decrease in infestation rates in the province. As of 2024 the infestation rate is 1.28 per cent. Currently, the ministry and the Federal Government fund a 50:50 cost-share rebate program called the Rat Control Program to provide financial and human resource assistance to rural municipalities and First Nations south of the Northern Administrative District to control rat populations in their respective jurisdictions. The well-used program is administered by the Saskatchewan Association of Rural Municipalities on behalf of the ministry. Eligible expenses under the program include costs of baits provided to ratepayers for free, cost of PCOs and pesticide applicator costs as well as the contracts for two Rat Control Technical Advisors who provide mentorship and technical guidance to PCOs and licensed pesticide applicators.

Regulatory Guidelines

Since 1956, the Norway rat has been a declared and regulated pest in Saskatchewan. Now, both Norway rat and roof rat are regulated pests under *The Plant Health Act* (Act) and *The Plant Health Regulations* (regulations) which came into force in 2024. Key provisions in the legislation include:

Authority and Enforcement

- Municipalities may appoint any person they consider qualified to serve as a PCO to enforce the Act and the regulations within the municipality.
- A municipality appointed PCO can enter any land or premises (excluding dwelling houses) to investigate pest infestations, collect samples, take necessary actions and enforce the Act with agreements and orders.
- An authorized person may conduct surveillance and sampling for declared and nuisance pests or conduct pest control with the permission of the owner or occupant.
- If satisfied that a pest or nuisance pest emergency exists, the minister may, by order, make an emergency declaration for rapid response and biosecurity measures. During the declared emergency period, authorized persons do not require permission to access land from the owner or occupant.

Orders and Restrictions

- A municipality-appointed PCO may issue an order to an owner or occupant (section 24 of the Act).
 - Orders may include restrictions on access to infested land/premises or restricted access to and movement of equipment, crop or crop parts, animal or animal parts, waste material, conveyance and any other terms or conditions described in the regulations.

Reporting and Notification

- Every owner or occupant of land is required to control, prevent and report declared pests.
 - Confirmed or suspected detection of Norway rat or roof rat should be reported to the municipality, PCO or the ministry (crops@gov.sk.ca) as soon as possible for rapid response.
- If these rat species are reported to the municipality, PCO or authorized person, they must notify the ministry as soon as possible.
 - Municipalities should submit an annual pest report to the ministry (crops@gov.sk.ca) by December 31 each year.
- Upon confirmation of the rat species, the ministry/PCO will contact the owner or occupant of land with instructions on the response plan.

Best Practices for Prevention and Management

Regular self-monitoring is essential to minimizing the risk of rat establishment.

Recommended Practices

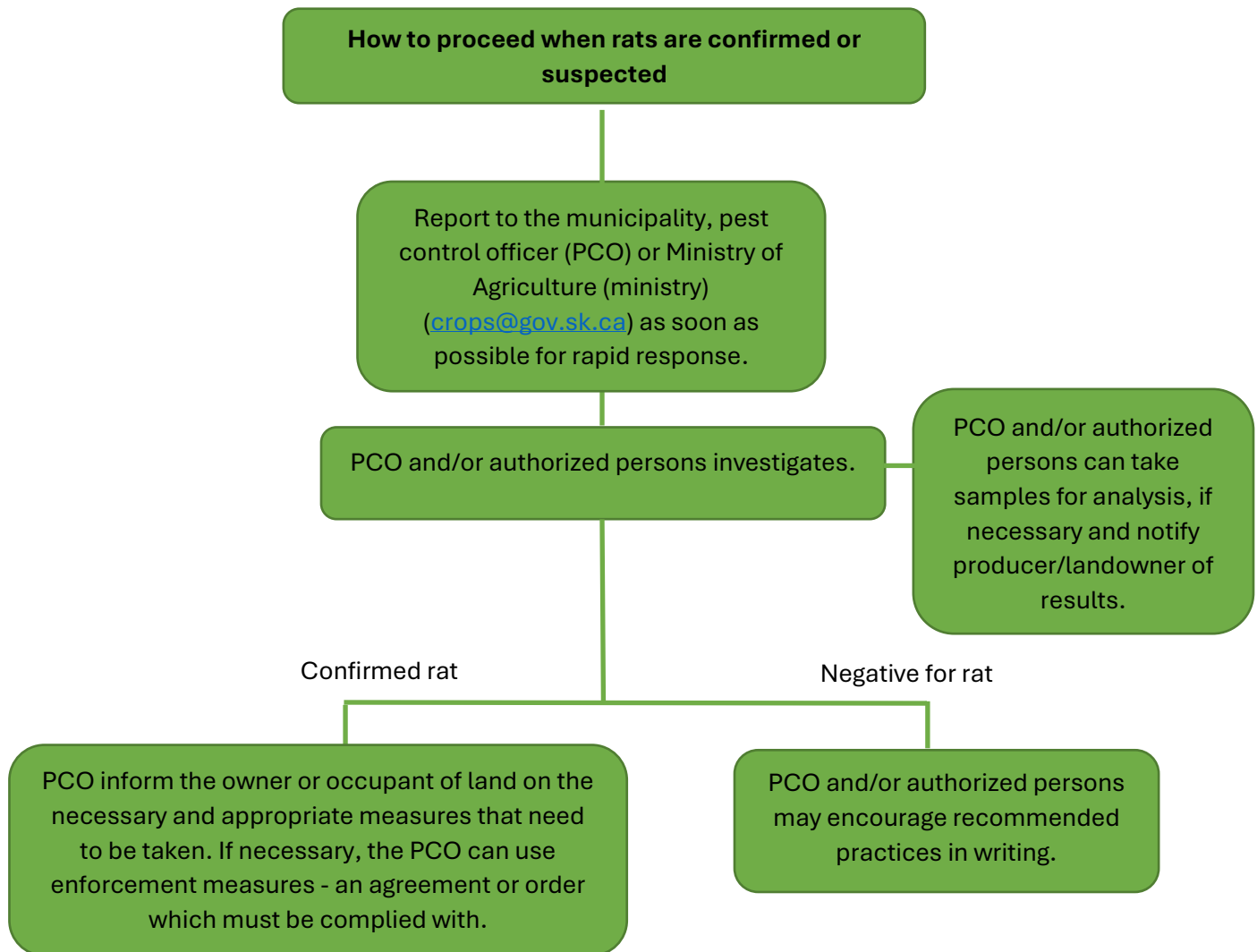
- Sanitation is very important, therefore prevent access to food, water and shelter in man-made environments.
 - Buildings and yards should be clear of spilled grain, debris, junk, etc. Garbage should be properly disposed of in tear-proof bags.
 - Build and maintain storage facilities and sheds with cement flooring that rats cannot penetrate.
 - Buildings and structures should be rat-proof. Seal any gaps or holes that rats can pass through.
 - Keep vegetation around buildings trimmed and remove weeds to avoid nesting sites.
 - Keep hay bales or grain bags off the floor. Rotate regularly and inspect to prevent rat establishment.
- Use recommended control options for rat infestations such as approved baits and traps and always follow the product label instructions.
- Train all farm employees in the identification of the signs of these invasive rat species and their management and response procedures.
- Inform visitors about the risk posed by rats and control visitor access to all fields and farm facilities.

Surveillance

- Conduct regular scouting, watching for signs of rat infestation.
 - Signs of rat infestation include burrows, smudge marks, gnawing, pet excitement, sounds, droppings and urine stains.
- Inspect bales, grain bags, equipment, machinery, etc., to ensure they are rat-free.

Response Plan

A response plan is designed to enable rapid and effective action when a pest outbreak occurs. The following steps outline the recommended procedures to follow when Norway rat or roof rat are confirmed or suspected on land or in premises.



Emergency Response Coordination

In a plant health emergency:

- The ministry leads the response, in collaboration with municipalities and other plant health partners.

Responsibilities

Saskatchewan Ministry of Agriculture

- Administer legislation and regulations related to Norway rat and roof rat as a declared pest.
- Compile and distribute the Norway rat and roof rat communication plan.
- Support and stay informed on current research and strategies to control Norway rat and roof rat.
- Provide education and outreach to producers, owners or occupants of land and industry on the importance of reporting and eradicating invasive rat species.
- Work with municipalities as needed on reports of suspected or confirmed sightings of these rat species.

Municipalities and Pest Control Officers

- Municipalities may appoint a PCO to investigate and take appropriate measures with respect to declared pests like Norway rat and roof rat.
- A municipality-appointed PCO can enforce the Act, including issuing orders or entering agreements with owners or occupants of land to control, destroy and prevent the spread of declared pests.

Producers and Owners or Occupants of Land

- Implement recommended practices consistent with the communication plan.
- Report any suspected or confirmed rat sightings to the municipality or appointed PCO and the ministry (crops@gov.sk.ca).
- Take necessary actions to control, destroy and prevent the spread of rats on any land or premises owned or occupied by them. This includes the destruction of any crop, vegetation or plant parts or other materials that may facilitate the growth and spread of rat populations.
- Comply with any orders issued by a PCO to control, destroy and prevent the spread of rats.

Contacts

For questions about rats and management practices, contact:

- Provincial Specialist, Insect and Pest Management - 306-787-4669.

For questions on legislation and regulatory guidelines, contact:

- Provincial Specialist, Pest Regulatory - 306-787-7474.

Resources

[National Voluntary Farm-Level Biosecurity Standard for the Grains and Oilseeds Industry - inspection.canada.ca](#)

[Rat Control Program - SARM | Saskatchewan Association of Rural Municipalities](#)

References

Note: The websites cited within the following references were accessed in December 2025

1. Rat Control in Saskatchewan. Website: [Link](#)
2. Managing rat and mouse pests - Province of British Columbia. Website: [Link](#)
3. Alberta's Rat Control Program. Website: [Link](#)