



ROOF RAT (Also known as Tree Rat, Ship Rat and Black Rat) (*rattus rattus*)

Roof rats are common in the Pacific Northwest, particularly in Western Washington. They are thought to have originated in Asia and reached Europe in the 6th Century. They were later passengers on ships coming to the United States. Today they primarily inhabit coastal areas. Although roof rats have been driven out of many areas by the larger Norway rat this is not true in Western Washington.

Roof rats are carriers of many different human diseases, including plague, typhus and leptospirosis. This is the rat made infamous for its role in spreading the bubonic plague that took millions of lives in the middle ages. It is also destroys crops and fruit trees, both by eating and contamination. In a residence they often pull down and contaminate insulation and chew electrical wires.

Roof rats often infest attic areas and walls. By nature they are climbers and can easily run up tree limbs, clinging vines and along overhead wires and utility lines. However, they will also nest in rockeries, woodpiles and in the floor insulation of crawl spaces. If this rat is seeking shelter, he can easily enter your home by climbing adjacent trees, gnawing through wood siding and partitions, or by crawling through even the smallest of unsealed holes or vents.

Roof rats feed on fruit, grain, cereals and other vegetation, but will eat almost anything. Pet food left in a dish outside and cereal products stored in a garage are favorite targets. If they have shelter from a green belt outside and food is available you are attracting them. They become active at dusk, and particularly like it when you are on vacation and leave your home vacant for a period



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