

Rats as Household Pests

You are all familiar with rats scampering across the floors of your houses. Perhaps most of you keep cats as the natural defense against these common household pests. Or on the other hand you may tolerate them with indifference in your home, which is not right. For rats and mice are the carriers of one of the most terrible diseases known to men.

Rats live in filthy places, but often in order to get food they enter our houses. They eat every kind of food and they destroy much food and other property.

They destroy everything they come in contact with such as food crops, merchandise, clothes, and house furniture: they eat fruits, vegetables, rice, sugar, meat, and young chickens: they ruin industries, farms, embankments. They are nocturnal in their habits, which means that they are active at night.

They are great travelers both over land and over sea.

Not only do rats destroy property, but they may carry disease germs on their fur. The fleas on rats often carry a dreadful disease, bubonic plague. It is one of the most dangerous of human diseases because few people ever recover from it.

There are several kinds of rats. Some of them climb up to the ceilings and nest there while others grow and multiply in the ground holes or dug-outs. They grow in number very rapidly. They are also very clever, knowing how

to live with man and to evade their enemies.

Rats are often attracted to a house because there is much food in and about it which they may eat. Rats delight in open garbage cans as flies and cockroaches do. If everything is kept clean and covered there is less attraction for rats.

The best way to get rid of rats is to trap them. It is very dangerous to try to poison them, for chickens, cats, and dogs may be poisoned and even the persons living in the house and in other houses.

Poisoning of rats is not practical because they may die in places we cannot reach, rot there, and give a foul odor to the house.

Rats are very cautious and are easily frightened. Therefore the trap should be covered with an old piece of cloth or it may be set in some protected place so that it is partly concealed. Rats have a very keen sense of smell and

may keep away from a trap because of the odor of human hands on it or the odor of other rats that have been in the trap; therefore, the trap should be kept clean. The bait should be something with a strong odor so as to attract the rats like dried fish or liver, but corn, rice, vegetables, or other food may be used.

Rats should be buried or burned as soon as they are killed so that the fleas that may be on them will not go to human beings after the rats are dead and carry disease to them.

