

Prevention and Control of Rodents in Shopping Centres

Rodent Problems in Shopping Centres

Improper handling of food debris in food premises, accumulation of disused articles, improper storage of goods, and structural defects such as cracks and holes in the ground contribute to rodent problems in shopping centres.

Besides, the space above false ceilings also provides good harbourages for rodents, while damaged false ceiling panels may provide channels for rodents to travel between a false ceiling and the floor.

Types and characteristics of rodents

Rodents are social animals living in groups. They have a good sense of smell. They are good at swimming and climbing. They reproduce quickly: an adult female rodent can give birth to about 50 young rodents in a year. Rodents commonly found in Hong Kong include *Rattus norvegicus* (sewer rat), *Rattus rattus* (black rat), and *Mus musculus* (house mouse)

Hazards caused by rodents

1. Transmission of Diseases

Rodents can directly or indirectly transmit to humans diseases such as plague, leptospirosis, scrub typhus, urban typhus and hantaviral infection.

2. Loss of Property

Rodents cause economic loss by gnawing building fittings and stored goods. They may bite electric wires or cables, posing fire hazards due to short-circuiting. They may also damage telephone wires and computer cables. Their excreta may spoil food and goods.

3. Biting People

Rodents normally avoid contact with humans, but may bite people when they feel their lives are at risk.

Signs of rodent infestation

Apart from finding rodents around the premises, other signs of rodent infestation include dead rodents, rodent droppings, burrows, runways, gnawing marks, footprints and smears.

Rodent Prevention and Control Measures

1. Fundamental Measures

(a) Remove food sources for rodents

- Keep the premises clean and tidy.
- Dispose of food remnants and refuse properly in covered rubbish bins, which have to be cleared daily.

(b) Eliminate rodent harbourage

- Regularly check the false ceiling panels and replace the damaged ones.
- Partition a false ceiling into smaller compartments to restrict rodent movement.
- Maintain a clear space of at least 1 metre between a false ceiling and any articles/furniture to prevent rodents from travelling between the false ceiling and the floor.
- Avoid accumulation of disused articles.

(c) Exclude rodents from shopping centres

- Use metal plates or cement to seal all openings left in the external walls, floors and ceilings after the installation of pipes, wires or split-type air conditioners.
- Lower the threshold clearance of doors to not more than 6 mm and affix metal kicking plates of at least 30 cm high to the lower edges of doors and door frames.
- Install wire meshes with apertures not larger than 6 mm to screen exhaust fans and ventilation louvers.

2. Supplementary Measures

(a) Trapping

Use baited trapping devices (e.g. cages) to catch rodents at the places where rodents frequently visit.

(b) Poisoning

Use rodenticides with caution. Strictly follow the application instructions on the label to avoid harming people and other animals.

(c) Appoint a trained personnel or a pest control company to handle rodent problems.

Food and Environmental Hygiene Department
Enquiry Hotline : 2868 0000

Pest Control Advisory Section
Tel : 3188 2064