

Biology of Commensal Rodents

Rat and mouse are rodents. The common species of commensal rodent in the urban areas of Hong Kong are sewer rat (*Rattus norvegicus* (Rn)), roof rat (*Rattus rattus* (R2)) and house mouse (*Mus musculus* (Mm)). Rodents are social animal usually more active at night. Although rodents always try to expand their territories of activities, they are afraid of new things and avoid touching new objects. They are good jumpers and can swim as well as dive. They also have excellent sense of touch and smell.

Adult rat takes 15-30 gm food and consumes about 30 gm water daily, whereas mouse takes only 3 gm of food and small amount of water everyday. A pair of adult rodent can produce 5-8 litters per year with 5-14 individuals per litter. The average life span of commensal rodents is about 1 year.

Sewer rat

Sewer rat is also called Norway rat or *Rattus norvegicus* (Rn). Sewer rat possesses a robust body of body length about 19-25 cm. The bicolor tail of sewer rat is shorter than the length of its head plus its body.

Sewer rat is a ground species that prefers digging burrows in loose soil or live in the lower floors of a building. The farthest activity range of the rat is about 50m. Common living environment of sewer rat are rear lanes, flower beds, ground floor and lower floors of a building as well as sewers.

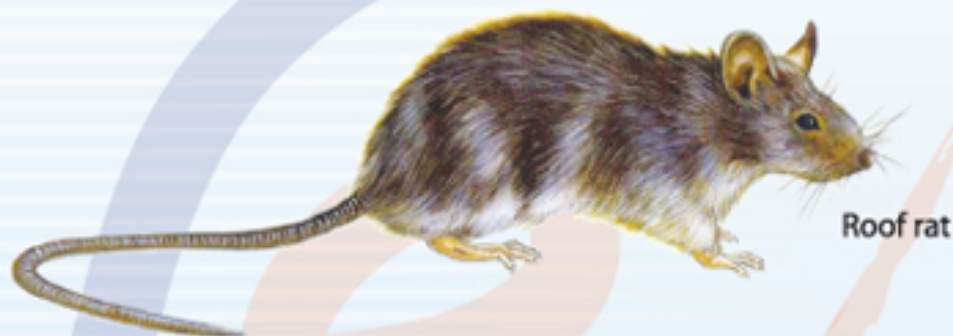


Sewer rat



Roof rat

Roof rat, also known as ship rat or *Rattus rattus* (R2), is good at climbing. It usually occupies higher portion of a house, particularly false ceiling and attic. Roof rat is smaller and slenderer than sewer rat. The body length of roof rat is about 17-20cm with the unicolor tail longer than the head plus body length. The activity range of R2 is 50m the farthest.



Roof rat

House mouse

House mouse, also known as *Mus musculus* (Mm), is a tiny rodent species. House mouse usually occupies cupboards or store rooms and arbourages amongst intact articles at homes. The activity range of Mm is only 5-10 m.



House mouse

Note : In acknowledgement of Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department's provision of the photos of the sewer rat, roof rat and house mouse. The Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department reserves all copyrights to the photos.

