

Control of rats in vegetable gardens

Recognize the problem

Gardens are affected by vegetable-eating rats. Rats are small rodents of about 10 to 20 cm, with brown or grey fur. The presence of rats is noticed when chewed vegetables are found showing teeth marks. Rats particularly like tomatoes, rape and cabbage heads. This results in low yields and poor quality vegetables. The rats can sometimes also transmit diseases.

Background

Rats are clever and difficult to control. They multiply fast so numbers of rats can increase quickly. Therefore, you may need to act in a number of different ways including the use of chemicals and rat-eating animals.

Management

- Cats help to reduce the number of rats because they hunt rats at night. The cats need to be kept hungry in order for them to be effective hunters.
- In extreme cases, use rat poisons called rodenticides. One such poison is Indometacin (e.g. Indocin) which comes as capsules that need to be opened. Sprinkle some product powder onto a rat attracting bait, such as dried kapenta fish or tomatoes. The fish or tomatoes are cut into pieces. The rat food is then put onto a small plate that is filled with water. Each plate is put at a distance of 10 m apart where the rats are likely to pass at night. Mark each bait-plate that it is poisonous, and hide the plates from view so that rats can get to it but no humans will touch it. The type of bait needs to be changed every 2 weeks as the rats will stop eating the familiar bait. Once the rats eat the bait and drink the water around the bait, they die, and can be collected the following day and buried safely. Please do not use other killing agents, such as permanganate or zinc phosphide (also called Rato). They are very dangerous to you and others.

10 to 20 cm brownish grey rat.
(Photo by H. Zell (CC BY-SA))



Feeding damage of rats. (Photo by Sarah Oh (CC BY-NC-SA))



When using a pesticide, always wear protective clothing and follow the instructions on the product label, such as dosage, timing of application, and pre-harvest interval.

Scientific name(s) > ***Rattus rattus***

The recommendations in this factsheet are relevant to: Zambia



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