

Rice Field Rat

Recognize the problem

Many species of rat may damage and cause losses in rice fields. The damage caused by rats may start in the seedbeds. Rice seeds may be eaten as soon as they are broadcast. Later, young emerged seedlings are eaten as well. The feeding damage on the rice stem by the rice field rats may resemble insect damage from afar, although rat damage is usually distinguished by the clean cut of the tiller. On mature plants the rats also feed on the rice grain. The damage on the grains is similar to bird damage. It can also cause damage to the rice bunds by burrowing and building tunnels and nests, which can cause bunds to collapse.

Background

Rats occur in both the wet and dry seasons. In rain fed rice crops rodents have their greatest impact in the wet season. The availability of food, water, and shelter are factors, which provide optimum breeding conditions. Rats have very high reproductive rates. Rats breed at 3 to 5 months of age, carry their young for 21 to 33 days and have 6 to 12 young per litter. It can produce 4 to 7 litters per year. Thus, a pair of rats and their offspring could produce 1,500 more rats in only one year, if they all survived.

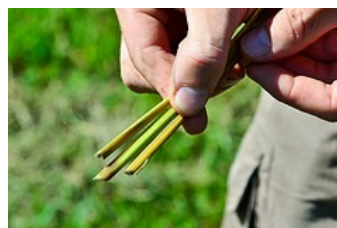
Management

- Carry out rat control campaign as a community/ group at the start of the rice planting season, when starting the rice nursery, before the heavy rain comes.
- Keep the edges of the field, the bunds, and surrounding areas clean and free of tall weeds to reduce hiding areas for rats.
- Plant at the same time as your neighbors—within 2 weeks of each other and synchronized harvesting.
- Use rat traps placed at strategic locations during the rice season when you observe rodent damage.
- Use registered rat poisons and place in rat burrows/holes or covered bait stations away; ensure it is placed away from children, pets, or livestock.
- Keep area around fields, homes, and villages clean — no garbage heaps, no weedy areas.
- Keep grain stores and surrounding area clean.

Rat in rice field. (Photo by IRRI (CC BY-NC-SA))



Rat damage. (Photo by IRRI (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 argentiventer*

The recommendations in this factsheet are relevant to: Cambodia



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