



# OH, RATS! HOW TO AVOID RODENTS AT COMMUNITY COMPOSTING SITES

## Rat facts: Did you know?

While many creatures are attracted to food waste, rats are the most common pest, with mice coming in a close second. Infamous for their tendency to inhabit urban dumpsters and alleyways, rats are seldom recognized for their intelligence and complex social order.

Humans and rats have a long and intertwined history as rats tend to feed on the food that humans discard. Rats have traveled the world with humans as stowaways on boats, sometimes spreading diseases in human populations such as the bubonic plague, leptospirosis, and hantavirus. Understanding rodent physiology and behavior can provide insight on how to prevent infestations.

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[ilsr.org/composting-ohrats](http://ilsr.org/composting-ohrats)

The word rodent is derived from the latin word **rodere** meaning "to gnaw."

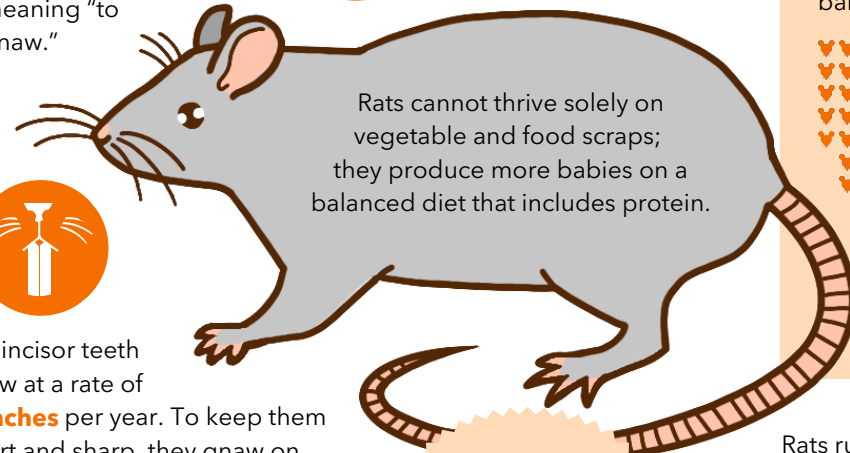


They are primarily active at night.



Rat incisor teeth grow at a rate of **5 inches** per year. To keep them short and sharp, they gnaw on hard surfaces. Their teeth can chew through anything softer than steel, including concrete, wood, and wires.

Rats cannot thrive solely on vegetable and food scraps; they produce more babies on a balanced diet that includes protein.



One healthy female can produce 84 babies in one year!



Reproduction can occur year-round.

Their urine glows under UV light.

Rats run along familiar paths and communicate by leaving pheromone scent trails in their urine and droppings.

Rat burrows are usually 18 in. deep; they can be 3 ft. deep. Rats need at least 6 in. of soil to burrow.

They like to have a "hard" roof.

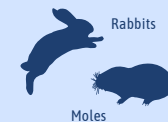
Rats prefer fresh, fertile soil because it's easy to dig in. They live within 100 ft of a reliable food source and are creatures of habit.



### Other Rodents



### Not Rodents



Rats can fit through holes the size of a quarter.



Mice can fit through holes the size of a dime.

**#1**

Norway rats are the most common US rat, found in all 50 states.