



Brown Rat

Rattus norvegicus

Brown rats have greyish-brown fur, a prominent pointed muzzle, and a long scaly tail. They are much larger than any mouse, but are comparable to - although less 'chubby' in appearance than - the water vole. They were introduced to Britain in around 1720.

Quick facts

Order Rodentia

Conservation status

GB *N/A - non-native*

RE CE E V NT LC DD

England *N/A*

Scotland *N/A*

Wales *N/A*

Global *Least concern*

GB trend *Stable*

Size body 15 - 27 cm, tail 10.5 - 24 cm

Weight 200 - 300 g, occasionally up to 600 g

Life span 1 year in the wild; 4 - 6 years in captivity

Habitat

Marshland, deciduous and mixed woodland, arable land, urban and garden, coastal.

Behaviour

Lives in family groups within loose colonies, which have hierarchies based on size and age. Not territorial. Digs burrows, entrances are usually linked by obvious, well-used runs.

Diet & Feeding

A true omnivore and will consume almost anything. Foraging behaviour varies by environment, food source, and population.

Reproduction

Typically 5 litters of 6 - 11 (max recorded 22) each year. Larger females have bigger litters. Breeding may be continuous, depending on food availability. Young rats can be important prey for owls and carnivores including polecats, stoats, and foxes.

Conservation & Threats

As a non-native species that is a major pest of stored foodstuffs as well as a carrier of various human diseases including Weil's disease, it is persecuted rather than conserved. Pre-breeding population is at least 6.5 million, probably rising in many urban habitats. Attempts to control numbers using poisoning may result in negative impacts on other wildlife.

Range

