

## Rat Inspection Guide

This guide is designed to help operators, owners and managers of food pods and food carts to look for signs of rats on their property. Rats are a public health risk because they spread disease. The goal is to prevent pest problems and to take care of any issues that arise. This guide offers tips on how to monitor your property for the presence of rats and rat damage.

Pod operators are required to follow their Integrated Pest Management (IPM) plan as part of the new food cart pod licensing. Pod operators must create an IPM plan during license review, which must be updated yearly. This guide will help in creating an IPM plan and schedule.

### The Dumpster/Grease Area

#### Always start at the dumpster/grease area

Rats and other pests are always looking for food, so this can be a problem area. Sometimes trash and grease are scattered on the ground. Sometimes the dumpster lid is left open. Inspect the area for droppings (like rat droppings), chewed materials and grease marks (brown smudges from oil and dirt).



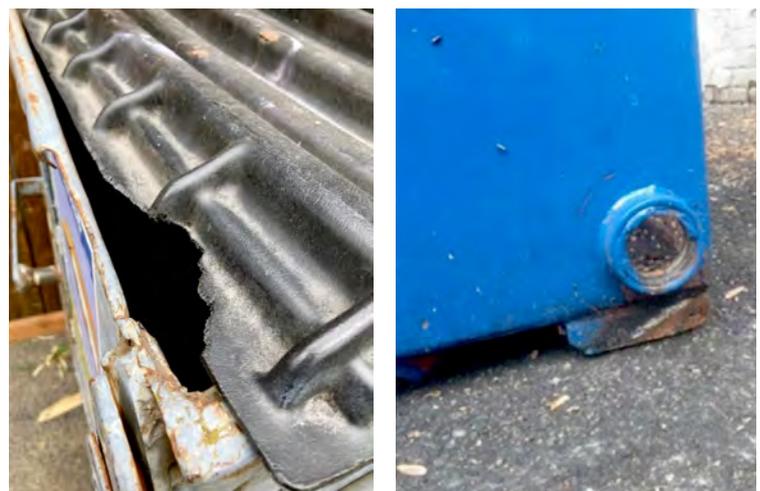
#### Pay special attention to the lid

Make sure the lid closes tightly to keep rats out. Also look for gnawed holes on top.

#### Look at the drain plug, if the dumpster has one

Make sure the drain plug is firmly in place. If it is missing, this is an easy way for rats to enter the dumpster.

In the photo, this dumpster is missing the plug and it needs to be replaced.



## Areas of Dirt and Soil

### Inspect areas of earth where rats can dig burrows

Check your property often and regularly for clues that you might have a rat issue. In the photo it's easy to see where the rat burrow is. Many burrows are harder to find.



### Rats will find places to dig

Some areas of the county have a lot of hard ground cover, like pavement or concrete. This limits where rats can burrow. But rats will find whatever open dirt is available to dig. For example, the burrow in the photo is located underneath a cart.



### Inspect the right-of-way for burrowing

Check the area between the street and the sidewalk (photo far right), also called the right-of-way. This is an area where rats can often find open dirt. This is especially common in the downtown area.



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## Runways

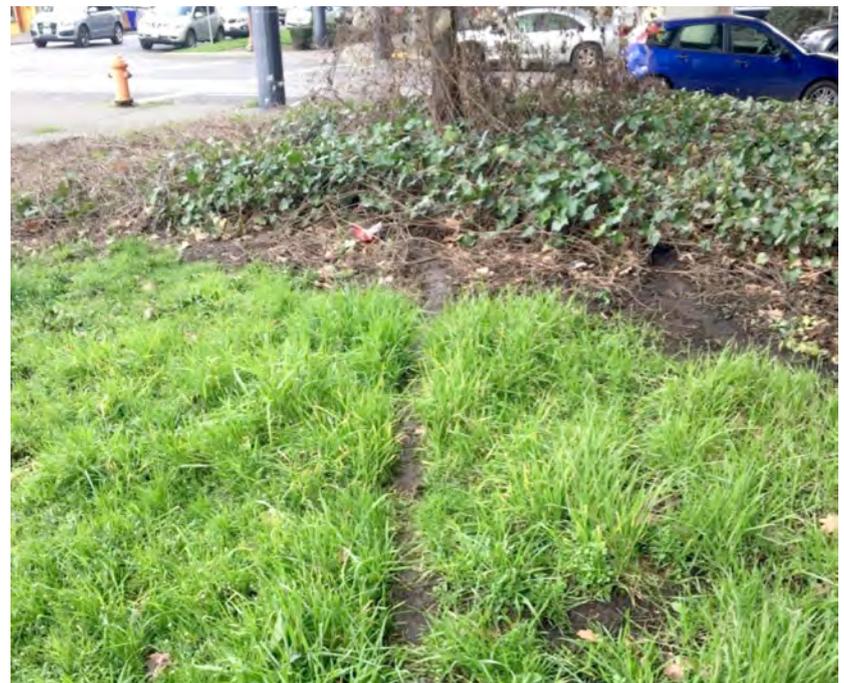
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### Rats leave trails called “runways”

Pay close attention to the leaf litter and vegetation on the ground for paths. Following runways will often lead you to other evidence, such as rat droppings.

### Some runways are easy to see, but most are not

The first photo shows a runway in dirt. The second photo shows one across grass. Most runways will be harder to identify.



## Track Marks

### Rat track marks are distinctive

The track marks (or foot prints) of rats are very well defined and uncommon. Other evidence is typically present to help determine rat activity, such as rat droppings. So finding exterior track marks is not a necessity.



### Interior track marks are a strong clue

Track marks in interior spaces are a strong clue and you should look for them. Look for these on dusty surfaces that aren't regularly cleaned, such as pipes and the structural frame underneath carts. With food trucks that have engines, look inside the hood to see if there is any rat activity.



## Grease Marks

### Rats leave brown smudges called “grease marks”

Rats have oil and dirt on their fur and will leave brown smudges called “grease marks” on surfaces they frequently cross. The darker the grease mark, the longer the problem has existed.



### Look at upper levels of a structure for signs of grease marks

Roof rats leave grease marks in the upper levels of a structure. This is a rare problem for food carts. But if the property has a patio cover or is near a lot of vegetation, this can be an issue.



# Environmental Health Services

## Think Like a Rat

### Think about all the factors that might contribute to a rat problem

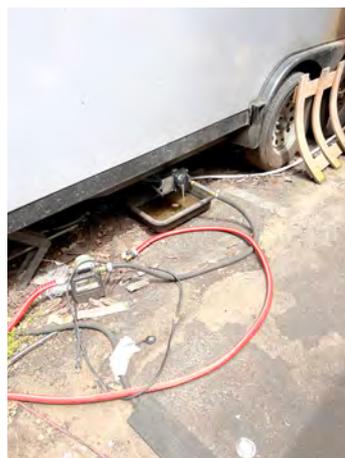
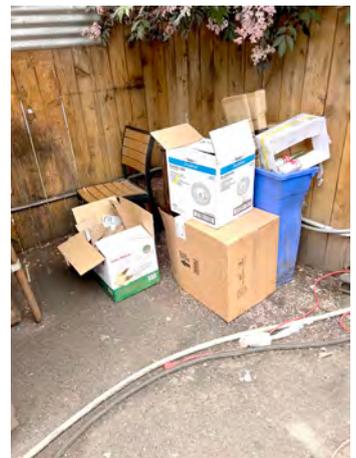
Take your time and perform your inspection thoroughly and thoughtfully. In other words: *Think like a rat.*

### Search all the out of the way places

Look for signs of rats in areas that are usually out of sight. Explore areas underneath carts, stored materials, vegetation and behind the dumpster and grease container. Also think about areas outside of the pod boundaries that might be harboring rats, such as nearby overgrown vegetation or open dirt.

### Remove unused materials

Discard any materials that can provide an area for rats to live: excess equipment, old building materials, discarded containers, etc. Pod operators are required to maintain clean lots. This includes areas around, under and behind carts.



## Questions?

If you have any questions about rats, you can call Vector Control: 503-988-3464