

# Pests and Vermin

This leaflet gives advice  
on identifying and dealing with  
some common pests.



## Common pests which can be found in and around the home are:

- Rats and Mice
- Wasps
- Cockroaches
- Bees
- Bedbugs
- Fleas
- Houseflies
- Herring Gulls
- Bats.

## Rats and Mice

Rats can spread disease such as Weils disease, rat bite fever and salmonella, all of which pose a significant threat to public health.

Common house mice are a nuisance. They can carry disease and cause considerable damage to plumbing (causing flooding) and cabling (causing fires).

### What to do if I discover rats or mice in my home?

Rodenticides and traps can be bought from most hardware stores and are to be used following the manufacturers instructions. For infestations, please seek professional advice.

## Wasps

Wasps can be beneficial in the garden as they eat greenfly and aphids.

They do not carry disease but can inflict a painful sting. They become more irritable when the weather turns colder and after feeding on over ripe fruit. Wasp stings are painful and can cause intense swelling.

## How do I get rid of wasps?

Trying to deal with a wasps nest on your own can be dangerous. Small infestations may be treated by yourself if it can be carried out safely and confidently.

The following advice may help:

- Always wear protective clothing.
- Wait until dusk. Wasps are less active in the dark.
- Use an insecticide following manufacturers' instructions.

For large infestations, seek professional advice.

## Cockroaches

Cockroaches can be caused by poor hygiene and cleanliness and can be a danger in your home. They can spread diseases such as salmonella and gastroenteritis.

You can help prevent cockroach infestations by:

- Regularly emptying and cleaning bins.
- Regular thorough cleaning.
- Keeping food in sealed containers.

### What to do if I find cockroaches in my home?

Getting rid of cockroaches is very hard because their eggs are resistant to poisons and may lay dormant for months before hatching. It is recommended that treatment is only carried out by professional pest control operatives.

## Bees

You should not carry out any treatment for bees as numbers are on the decline and they are generally not aggressive. In instances where bees swarm houses please contact your nearest beekeeper association for advice.

[www.aberdeenbeekeepers.net](http://www.aberdeenbeekeepers.net)

## Bedbugs

Bedbugs are small brown insects that feed on human blood causing rashes and allergic reactions. They are generally found on bed frames and mattresses and usually feed without you noticing

### What do I do if I suspect bedbugs?

Contact a professional pest control operative as soon as possible as early treatment is the most effective.

## Fleas

Fleas are biting insects that feed on the blood of animals and humans. They can live in soft furnishings and animal fur.

### What to do if I find fleas in my Home?

Once an infestation has been confirmed it is important to carry out a thorough treatment yourself or contact a professional pest control operative.

## Prevention and control

- Flea and tick shampoos help to rid a pet of fleas and ticks it already has on it, although some have residual activity. Work the shampoo in over the animal's entire body and then leave it on at least 10 minutes before you rinse it off. Always follow manufacturers' instructions.
- Pet bedding and upholstery should be thoroughly vacuumed and, where possible, washed.
- The infested areas should then be treated with an insecticide spray formulated for fleas. Once you have sprayed the areas you should leave them for ten days before vacuuming thoroughly and repeating the treatment.
- Always follow manufacturers' instructions before commencing any treatment.
- Wash pet beddings, where possible, every week. Preferably at a temperature of 50°C to kill fleas.

## Houseflies & Bluebottles

Flies are insects which breed and feed in dirty conditions. Houseflies can transmit intestinal worms and cause gastroenteritis. Bluebottles can spread disease too.

### How can I avoid getting houseflies and bluebottles?

Good hygiene practices, such as not leaving food uncovered and disposing of waste properly, can help prevent attracting flies into the home.

## What can I do to get rid of houseflies and bluebottles?

Houseflies and bluebottles are best controlled by taking preventative measures at source. Dustbins should be kept clean and all food should be wrapped up or covered. Once flies are in the house, fly papers work well. You can also use fly sprays to kill individual insects. All treatments are to be used as per manufacturers' instructions.

A sudden infestation of bluebottles can indicate that a small animal has died in the area and the source of this will have to be located.

## Herring Gulls and the law

Herring gulls and their eggs are protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981. It is an offence to injure, kill or harm the gulls, nest or eggs unless done so under licence.

### How can I prevent seagulls nesting on my property?

This is an area in which a number of pest control companies have specialist knowledge and, before committing to a programme of works, you are advised to consider seeking specialist help. In general terms, gulls can be discouraged from nesting and roosting on your property by using a variety of methods:

- Fitting of wires or nets to prevent herring gulls landing

- Fitting of short spikes contained in a special plastic base to nesting locations such as dormer roofs
- Fitting of long spikes to nesting locations such as chimney stacks.

Any work on roofs should only be carried out by competent persons who are aware of safety requirements. It is recommended that all roof fixtures and fittings be checked with your local fire service to ensure that they do not contravene any fire regulations or constitute a fire risk from lightning strikes.

If you want to feed birds without encouraging seagulls:

- Only put out bird food from November to May as there is nearly always enough natural food available the rest of the year
- Put food in wire baskets or under a roofed bird table so that only small birds can get it
- Put out small amounts of food frequently rather than large amounts at a time

## Bats

All bats are protected by the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981

It is an offence to:

- Kill, injure, catch or keep bats
- Damage, destroy or obstruct bat roosts
- Disturb bats while they are roosting, for example by entering known roosts or hibernation sites

- Sell, barter or exchange bats, alive or dead.

**It is a legal requirement to consult Scottish Natural Heritage before you do anything that might affect bats or their roosts.** As bats return to the same places every year, a bat roost is protected even if there aren't bats there all the time.

Consult Scottish Natural Heritage before:

- Blocking, filling or installing grilles over old mines or tunnels
- Carrying out building, alteration or maintenance work
- Getting rid of unwanted bat colonies
- Removing hollow trees
- Re-roofing
- Remedial timber treatment
- Rewiring or plumbing in roofs
- Treatment of wasps, bees or cluster flies.

## Bats and disease

The only known disease associated with bats in the UK is European Bat Lyssavirus, a rabies type virus. It has only been found in a very small number of bats. There is no risk if you do not handle bats.

For further information on bats contact Scottish Natural Heritage or the Bat Conservation Trust.

[www.snh.org.uk](http://www.snh.org.uk)

[tayside\\_grampian@snh.gov.uk](mailto:tayside_grampian@snh.gov.uk)

[www.bats.org.uk](http://www.bats.org.uk)

**Bat Helpline: 0345 1300 228**



# Contact Us

## Aberdeenshire Council Environmental Services

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