

Practical rat control in the city of Zürich – there is more than just baiting!

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The Urban Pest Advisory Service (UPAS) is responsible for controlling rats and mice in public areas in the city of Zürich. For rat problems on private properties, the house owner has to contact a private pest control company. Rats however do not care about property boundaries and, usually, nobody feels responsible for solving the rat problem and paying for it. UPAS conducts a survey of the area concerned to ensure a quick solution in such cases. If rats appear repeatedly in the same surroundings near houses, and water (lakes or rivers) is not close by, it is important to check sewer plans in relation to the position of the rats' burrows. If they overlap, the sewer system has to be checked with a sewer camera and if damage is found, repairing the sewer pipe is the only effective solution.

I present a practical rat management case with the control measures used and how the case was finally solved. This includes several minutes of professional film sequences of the rat management case.

Rats appeared for two consecutive years in the backyards of two houses. By the time the UPAS was informed, high numbers of rats had established themselves. In one of the houses there was a bakery that kept old bread in paper bags next to the backdoor. In August 2009, direct baiting into the rat burrow openings was conducted with 1 kg difenacoum grain bait and three chlorophacinone wax blocks (100 g). During a follow-up visit nine days after the placement of bait, two moribund rats were seen. No further rat activity was observed after 15 days and the bait blocks showed no sign of fresh gnawing. Comparing the position of the rat burrows with the sewer plans of the backyard we found no overlaps. The baker was ordered to install a rat safe box to store his old bread.

In August a year later UPAS was called again and an even bigger rat population of approximately 30 rats was evident in the same areas of the backyard. Again the rat burrows were baited with 1 kg of difenacoum grain bait. In addition, six coumatetralyl bait bags (100 g) were placed in safe positions. It was found that the rats could easily enter the newly-installed bread box of the bakery. The baker was contacted again and storage of bread in the backyard was forbidden. 11 days after the first baiting the follow-up visit showed no signs of fresh rat activity. The house with the bakery had steps covered with an iron grill leading into a small, dark underground room. A leak in the sewage pipe of the house was found by inspecting this room. It was there that rats were able to come to the surface from the sewer system. The house owner was contacted and had to renew this sewage pipe and pay for the rat control. The rat problem was finally solved with these measures.