



National Pest Technicians Association

# **NATIONAL RODENT SURVEY HIGHLIGHTS MAJOR PUBLIC HEALTH THREAT**

Local authority economies are already threatening public health, reveals the latest national rodent survey report from the National Pest Technicians Association (NPTA) and BASF Pest Control Solutions. And current unprecedented national austerity measures are set to make the position markedly worse.

The benchmark annual report published this week (Thursday March 17) shows the largest yearly fall in recorded local authority rat and mouse treatments since the survey was instituted in 1999. At the same time, it reveals much of this decline results from changes in charging practice rather than any decline in infestation levels.

“Not so long ago we’d have welcomed the significant fall in professional rodent treatments reported by the public sector in 2009/10 as a sure sign of success in the constant battle against rats and mice,” says NPTA chief executive John Davison.

“But its clear association with greater local authority charging for what always used to be seen as an important public health duty sounds a serious warning for the future. All the more so for the fact that the real impact of council cuts will only become apparent from now on.”

On a like-for-like basis (comparing reports from only the same local authorities in each year to eliminate the distortions of the different response levels) the latest NPTA survey shows national brown rat and house mouse treatments levels down by around 19% and 12% respectively on 2008/9.

Those local authorities charging for rat control work, however, recorded a 28% year-on-year reduction in treatment levels. In contrast, those continuing to offer rat control services free of charge saw treatment levels fall by just 9%. Comparable figures for house mouse treatments were 15% and 8%.

“The number of local authorities charging for the rodent control services they’ve traditionally provided free of charge increased sharply in 2009/10,” John Davison points out. “Indeed, over 60% are now charging for at least some of their rat control services and nearly three quarters for house mouse treatments.

“What is more, as they respond to current austerity measures our survey figures indicate this is likely to rise to over 75% and 80% respectively. Which means more and more householders and businesses failing to have infestations professionally treated until they reach intolerable levels.”

In parallel to the decline in local authority treatments, NPTA members report a worrying increase in poorly-managed DIY rodent control. Together with the far more reactive and less co-ordinated approach to control they are seeing across the country as local authority pressures bite, this will rapidly allow populations to build-up to levels likely to compromise public health.

“It’s crazy that councils have a statutory duty to deal with dog fouling, yet no such responsibilities to tackle the far greater public health challenge posed by rats and mice,” observes John Davison.

“As local authority members and officers face up to their current fiscal challenges, we urge them to heed recent Chartered Institute of Environmental Health guidance that increasing charges for pest control services and/or contracting out these services is inconsistent with their public health responsibilities.

“While we’re very worried about the direct effects of public sector cuts, we’re even more concerned about the impact they will have on the central role local authorities have long played in pest control training and practice development. The full implications of this are unlikely to become evident for eight to 10 years – by which time it will be far too late to take any corrective action.”

NPTA and BASF Pest Control Solutions believe a major change in national rodent control practice is essential if far greater rat and mouse problems are not to become an inevitable consequence of public sector cutbacks.

They urge householders, businesses and communities to work much harder together to discourage rodents. At the same time, they insist that rat and mouse control must increasingly be focused on only the most effective treatments using the best available baits and baiting practices. And, hardest of all perhaps, they call on private businesses and public sector organisations to co-ordinate their control activities far better across communities.

*Copies of the full 2009/10 Rodent Survey Report are available at [www.npta.org.uk](http://www.npta.org.uk) and [www.pestcontrol.basf.co.uk](http://www.pestcontrol.basf.co.uk)*