



National Pest Technicians Association

# **NATIONAL RODENT SURVEY REPORT 2006**

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# NATIONAL RODENT SURVEY - 2006

## Introduction

Welcome to our **seventh** consecutive **National Rodent Survey Report** undertaken by the **National Pest Technicians Association (NPTA)** based upon facts and figures provided by a growing number of local authorities within the United Kingdom (UK). This year's report is based upon comparing the years 2005 to 2004 or in the special case of local authorities who keep their statistics as per their financial year 2005/06 to 2004/05.

What is now history was started by the NPTA in the year 1999 and our very first Report<sup>1</sup> published in 2000 quickly confirmed that rat numbers all over the UK were on the increase certainly putting a stop to anyone thinking that rat numbers were reducing! One great benefit of this Report is that we are able to have a much shorter timescale with getting the facts from the survey results and then to be printed and published. Certainly without the help and assistance of the high percentage of Councils who responded within the timescale set it just would not happen and for this we say publicly a **'big thank you for your efforts'**.

A most interesting development during the past seven years is that we have now linked in with many journalists and researchers from all the various medias (television and radio – especially local Radio and also both national and local newspapers) enquiring as to \* **“ details of the latest statistics?”**; \* **“ when will the next survey be published?”**; and \* **“ rodent information and facts generally?”** to support their particular programme makers, their producers or editors needs. It surprises us all here at NPTA House how large our current database of persons and businesses has grown in the last seven years and who actually requests this report.

Unfortunately it has become apparent from the returns for this report that, contrary to all the information these reports have generated and the expert advice given by many leading authorities in the pest control and environmental health industry, the beaurocrats in central and local government continue to put this country's public health at risk by imposing unrealistic budgets which, in turn, reduce the efficiency of the pest control section and force the Authorities to make a charge to eradicate these public health pests.

Once again we would urge those in power to re-evaluate these **charging policies** before the problem **seriously effects the UK's public health.**

## What are the important headline news within this years' Report?

**That there has been another serious increase in reports of infestations of rats and for treatments carried out (for both brown rats and what we term “summer rats”) throughout the UK.**

In addition to this, for the very first time in the seven years of these Reports, the total number of mice infestations reported and where treatments were carried out has gone above the zero level to give an actual increase of twelve point five percent (**12.5%**).

Sadly the overall statistics for this Report now show that the 2005 slight reduction in the brown rat population has been overtaken by **another year of all round increases**. The line graphs on page 5 show only too well that for both “all year round **brown rats (*rattus norvegicus*)**” and also **“summer rats”** we have to show an increase of **13%** and **22%** respectively. These percentages when added to the previous six years of statistics means that we show a year on year increase of **39%** and **69%** respectively.

As already mentioned for the very first time in this year's Report we find that the total number of **house mice (*Mus domesticus*)** infestations treated by local authorities responding to this survey has gone up yet again to show a huge **14% increase** (in 2005 we had to report a **7% increase**). Whilst this has been nothing similar to the huge number of rat treatments we have had to report over the seven year period it means that our year on year house mice totals have finally gone above zero and show for the very first time an **increase of 12.5%**.



# Who supplied the statistics, facts and information for this year's survey?

Included at Appendix D, part 1, is a complete list of each and every local authority in regional order who assisted the NPTA in providing full and meaningful figures.

As a new venture we have created a new part 2 to Appendix D to include details of those Counties who provided a **100%** return rate or a high response rate of **80%** or higher. These listed Counties are to be congratulated for achieving such a high return.

It is so pleasing to say this seventh report is based upon a steadily increasing number of returns from local authorities.

As already said on the Introductory Page, we here at NPTA House would like to place on record our thanks to all those who took part for their help, support and assistance.

A copy of our letter of invitation to take part in the survey sent out in the last week of July 2006 is shown at Appendix B and the actual questionnaire used is shown at Appendix C. For the record, to newcomers to this Report, except for removing the statistical questions used in the very first survey<sup>1</sup> about Black Rats (*rattus rattus*) page 1 of the questionnaire has remained the same.

Once again we have asked specific questions directed:

1. to those local authorities who are now charging for their pest control service (specifically for rat and mice destruction);
2. for additional details of any noticeable changes (good or bad) in their liaison arrangements with their respective water companies, plus;
3. to Pest Control Technicians (PCTs) as to their own personal thoughts and ideas for variations in rodent numbers in their own Council area.

From the hundreds of replies we have received this year we have created our **“TOP SIX FACTORS CAUSING MAJOR PROBLEMS”** which are listed on pages 10/11. We have also attempted to summarise other less understood problems that PCTs have expressed. These latest comments are included within Appendix A and we hope, as always, they make for an “interesting read”.

## A few thoughts on the development of “Charging Policies”

Interestingly there appear to be a consensus within Councils who charge for their service to allow people on reduced incomes to continue to have a “free” service. Whilst we generally view this change to charge for clearing up domestic related rodent infestations as a step in the wrong direction we believe these “special free services” to be a particularly positive step in keeping garden areas and homes free from rodents.

This steady increase in the number of councils “charging” for the service is one that concerns us in that everyone agrees that when a charging policy is introduced the number of sightings of rats and mice reduces and yet everyone realises this does not mean the number of rodents is lower. Some Councils have in fact after a couple of years of experience cancelled their charging policy believing it is not looking after the public's health.

An interesting point worthy of mention is that whilst charging policies have risen in number over the last 7 or so years, so have the total number of rat and mice sightings. Is there any correlation here?

Very slowly we have noticed that a few Councils (at the moment) have closed down their Pest Control sections and placed the necessary work to an outside Pest Control Servicing Company. From the overall UK pest control industry's point of view this can be an opportunity for many businesses to expand and take on more staff. Our only concern is that obviously it is essential that whoever is chosen to do the work have PCTs fully trained and experienced and that the company itself is a full member of a professional membership body. This ensures the work is undertaken in a full and professional manner.

What we do decry is any move towards householders undertaking the work in a DIY fashion that allows

rodents to continue to survive through bad application techniques, including the common problem of under feeding of the right type of rodenticide. Placing of rodenticides in the correct location to prevent accidental poisoning of non target species is another problem which can occur with amateur use products. However, for this Report, whenever a local authority has informed us they have put the pest control out to private tender, we have followed this up by getting their contractor's latest statistics<sup>3</sup> for treatments commenced.

However, in one or two instances the returns received indicate that the authority having put the work out to a private contractor then feels for some reason they do not have to monitor the level of complaints that the contractor is undertaking, or how many re-visits that contractor then has to complete to bring the infestation to a close. **Without feedback how can they satisfy the auditor that a contract is “giving value for money” and serves the needs of their council tax payers?**

Many concerns have been raised with our Association through our members regarding both charging policies and contracting pest control to an outside contractor.

In our 2005 National Rodent Report<sup>2</sup> the question of charging policies was also questioned and in our opinion was summed up beautifully by a Senior EHO from one of our local authority members entitled:-  
**“ The Price of Everything and the Value of Nothing.”**

That short letter summed up the general feelings of many managers of pest control units within local authorities and has been agreed with many times, it's now time local authorities looked back to their original aims, that was to safeguard the conditions and health of the public within the borough.

In the UK the **brown rat** (*Rattus norvegicus*) has always been associated with drains and sewers and time after time local authorities are telling us that where new outbreaks of surface rats have been found, in over fifty per cent of infestations these appear to be associated with either defective, worn out, broken or badly maintained drainage and/or sewerage systems.

Many water authorities only pay lip service to the very serious matter of Sewer Baiting and although many still contract local authorities or private contractors to undertake this work, the budget has not been increased for many years, therefore as costs for labour, vehicles, equipment and poisons have increased the actual number of chambers baited has decreased.

Our main aim of continuing to undertake this survey every year is that with the NPTA having the largest database of business members undertaking pest and rodent control in the UK and also a special category of local authority membership, we need to lead the way and we believe it is important that we publish annually these survey findings for the attention of the following:

- \* the UK pest control industry generally;
- \* each and every local authority in the UK remembering that they do have a legal and statutory responsibility for pest management/ pest control within their overall remit for “protecting the public's health”;
- \* to certain like-minded Institutions and Associations that have the responsibility for the training of future staff who will be involved in pest control / pest management matters;
- \* to those in decision making positions within both central and local government;
- \* separately, as we did last year, we shall involve the Parliamentary Standing Committee entitled the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs Select Committee, currently chaired by the Rt. Hon Michael Jack MP, and consisting of an all party group of 16 MPs.
- \* to those bodies we believe have a bearing on rodent numbers, namely the owners of large tracts of land including the privatised Water and Rail System Companies and the Waterway System.

Although it may seem the National Pest Technicians Association in some parts of the report point the finger at some failings within local authority pest control, it needs to be acknowledged that without the assistance of local authorities within the UK we could not compile this annual report and we must place on record our most sincere thanks to all those authorities who took the time to complete the questionnaire.

# Outline national findings and statistics of the National Rodent Survey 2006

The average overall findings for the United Kingdom are as follows:

**The total number of Infestations reported during the previous two years (2004 and 2005) and dealt with by local authorities is divided into:**

## BROWN RAT FINDINGS

We have to announce that yet again we show an increase in the number of Brown Rat infestations reported, this being of thirteen percent (**13%**) in the overall average UK figures, even though in last year's Report<sup>2</sup> we showed a reduction of minus eight percent (**-8%**). This means that taking the figures for the past 7 years we have now had a year on year increase **totalling thirty nine percent (39%)**. The figures as always from individual local authorities ranged enormously but except for the Isle of Man all regions consistently showed an increase except in the Eastern Region where they remained the same as last year. These regional figures can easily be seen in the table entitled "Regional Findings".

### Summary Statement

**Adding this 13% increase onto previous years overall percentage increases and decreases makes a reportable total increase of 39% for the years 1998 to 2005 covered by our seven reports.**



## HOUSE MICE

Again the figures from individual local authorities ranged widely but this latest Report shows for the **first** time that all the regional averages showed an increase

except for the Isle of Man where they remained the same.

It is to be hoped that we are able to suppress this increase, particularly as more and more Councils report that many homes carry out DIY mice treatments with often very poor results.

### Summary Statement

**Adding this 14 per cent (14%) increase to the previous overall figures means that in the years 1998 to 2005 covered by our seven reports we have now found that for the very first time we have gone above the zero mark and show an overall twelve point five per cent (12.5%) year on year increase in House Mice.**

## SUMMER BROWN RAT FINDINGS

Again this Report has shown an overall increase for the summer of 2005 compared to the summer of 2004 with a massive overall UK average increase of **twenty two percent (22%)**.

For the very first time every region, without exception shows increased figures. Regional figures are shown in the table headed "Regional Findings".

### Summary Statement

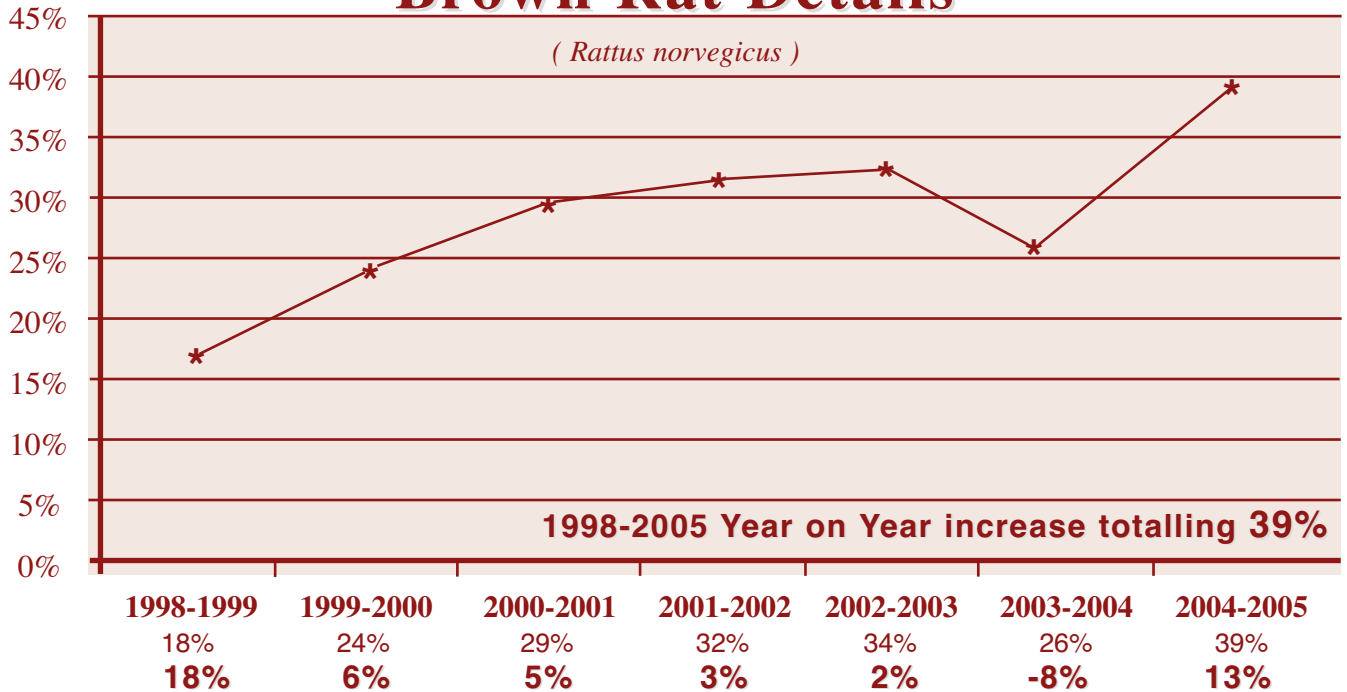
**Adding this 22% increase onto the previous years overall figures means in the years 1998 to 2005 we have now experienced a total overall increase of 69% in Summer Rat reports and treatments covered by our seven reports.**

We believe new readers need to be aware why the NPTA invented this term of "Summer Rat" which was carefully explained in the very first report<sup>1</sup>.

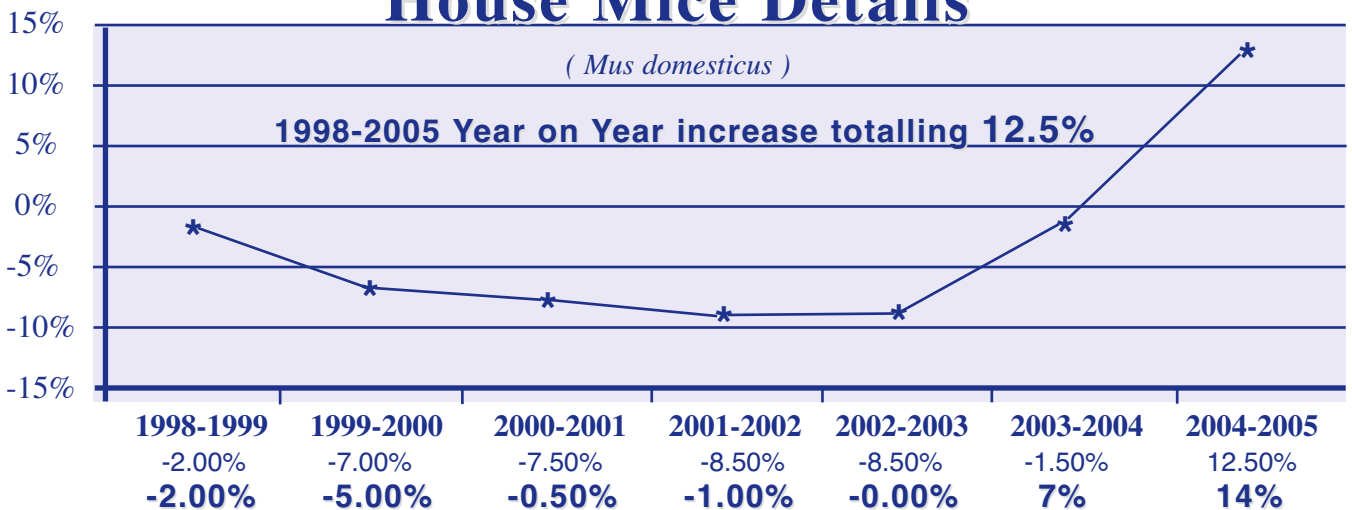
The term relates to those brown rats (*Rattus norvegicus*), which were the subject of a request for treatment to the various local authorities for the summer of 2005 compared to the summer of 2004 (**Summer being from April 1st until September 30th each year**).

In 1998 and 1999 (prior to the Annual Survey) reports were coming back to the NPTA from both members and local authorities that they were getting much busier in the "summer months", more so than had been their normal experience for many decades. It should be appreciated that as far as local authorities had been used to in both the 1980's and 1990's, the summer had usually been a comparatively quieter time for requests for rat treatments from the public.

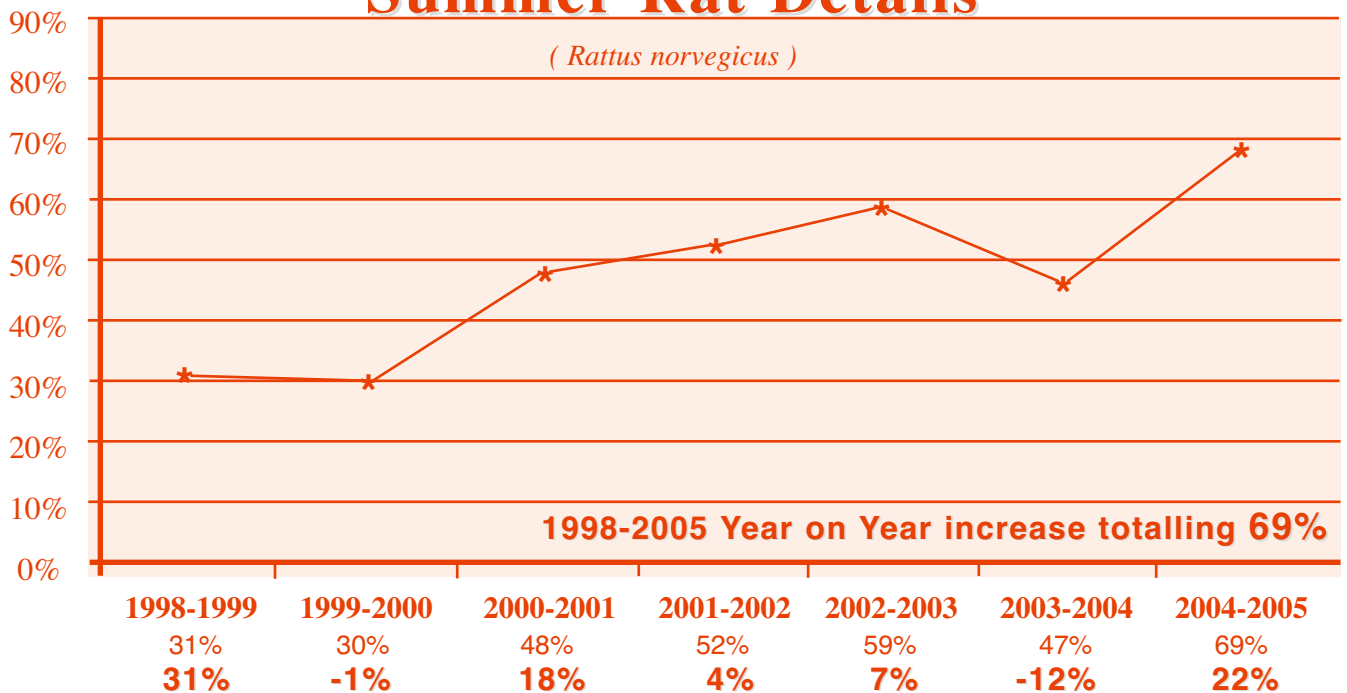
## Brown Rat Details



## House Mice Details



## Summer Rat Details



# Regional Findings

The map accompanying the report summarises the survey findings region by region. The table below of the 15 regions details these same findings:

Region's Name	Brown Rats	House Mice	Summer Rats
Eastern	0%	4%	14%
East Midlands	13%	1%	12%
Isle of Man	9% decrease	0%	43%
London	4%	5%	6%
Midlands	16%	13%	24%
North Western	21%	11%	22%
Northern	27%	10%	36%
Northern Home Counties	15%	27%	36%
South East	12%	29%	26%
South Western	18%	26%	21%
Southern	10%	20%	14%
Yorkshire	6%	10%	13%
Northern Ireland	39%	10%	27%
Scotland	11%	22%	21%
Wales	14%	25%	12%
<b>U K TOTALS:</b>	<b>13%</b>	<b>14%</b>	<b>22%</b>

**Note:** For the very first time since we commenced these surveys we show in this table only one decrease in the number of infestations treated by local authorities in 2005, compared to the figures provided by local authorities in 2004.

## Information.

We believe new readers need to be aware why the NPTA invented this term of “**Summer Rat**” which was carefully explained in the very first report<sup>1</sup>.

The term relates to those brown rats (*Rattus norvegicus*), which were the subject of a request for treatment to the various local authorities for the summer of 2005 compared to the summer of 2004 (**Summer being from April 1st until September 30th each year**).

One has to appreciate that way back in 1998 and again in 1999 (prior to the Annual Survey starting) reports were coming back to the NPTA from both our members and local authorities that they were getting much busier in the “summer months”, more so than had been their normal experience for many decades. It should be appreciated that as far as local authorities had been used to in both the 1980’s and 1990’s, the summer had usually been a comparatively much quieter time for requests for rat treatments from the public.

# Division of statistics into regions

We have continued our policy of dividing the UK into the same fifteen (15) regions. These fifteen regions are shown on the report maps and are:

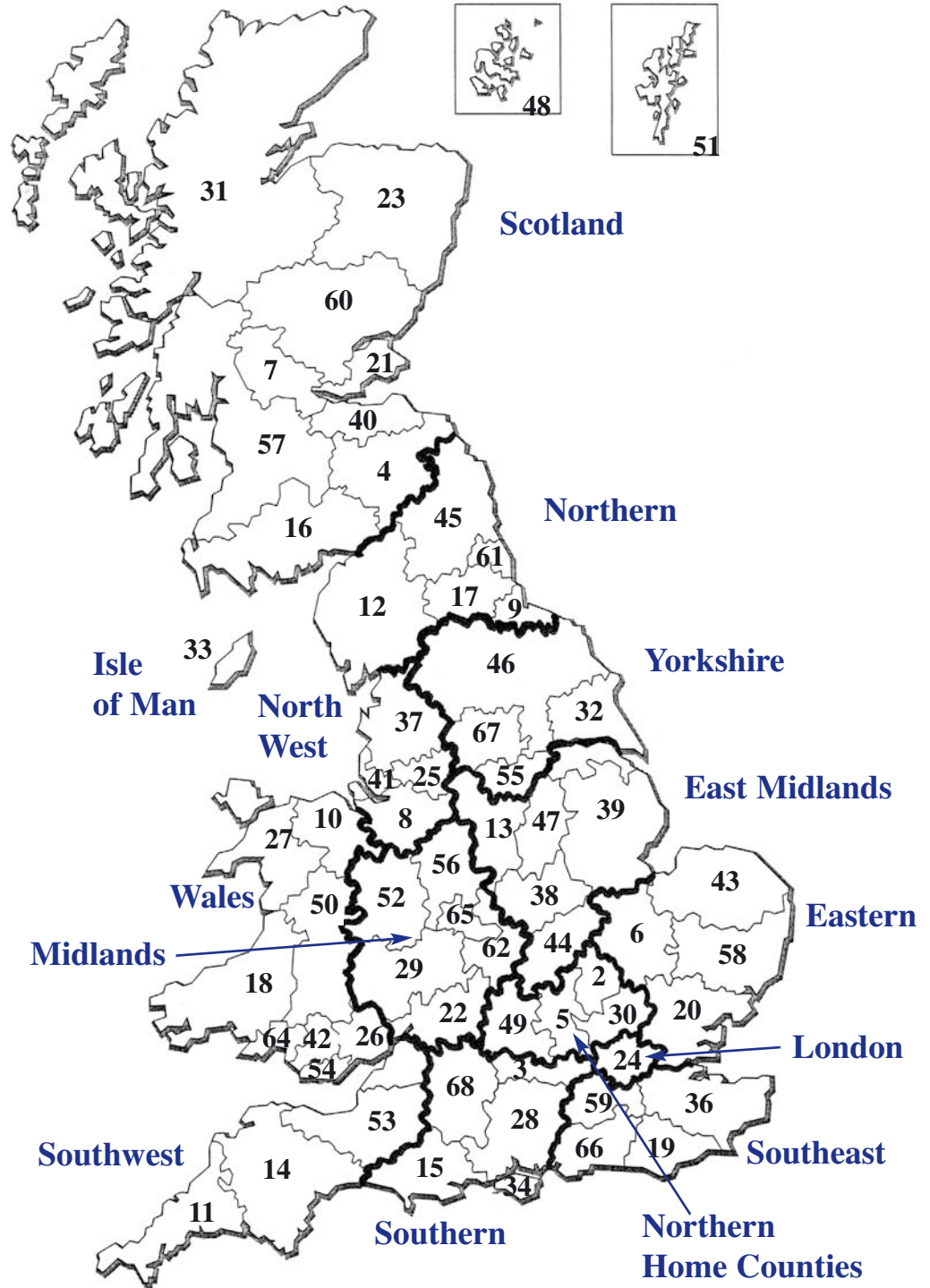
<b>Name of Region</b>	<b>Includes the following counties</b>
<b>Eastern</b>	<b>Cambridgeshire, Essex, Norfolk and Suffolk</b>
<b>East Midlands</b>	<b>Derbyshire, Leicestershire, Lincolnshire, Northamptonshire and Nottinghamshire</b>
<b>Isle of Man</b>	<b>Isle of Man</b>
<b>London</b>	<b>includes all the London Borough Councils</b>
<b>Midlands</b>	<b>Gloucestershire, Herefordshire &amp; Worcestershire, Shropshire, Staffordshire, Warwickshire and West Midlands</b>
<b>North Western</b>	<b>Cheshire, Greater Manchester, Lancashire and Merseyside</b>
<b>Northern</b>	<b>Cleveland, Cumbria, Co.Durham, Northumberland, Tyne and Wear</b>
<b>Northern Home Counties</b>	<b>Bedfordshire, Buckinghamshire, Hertfordshire and Oxfordshire</b>
<b>Northern Ireland</b>	<b>Includes all the Northern Ireland local authorities</b>
<b>Scotland</b>	<b>includes all the Scotland local authorities</b>
<b>South East</b>	<b>East Sussex, Kent, Surrey and West Sussex</b>
<b>South Western</b>	<b>Cornwall, Devon, Somerset and also Bristol and its surrounding area</b>
<b>Southern (includes Isle of Wight)</b>	<b>Berkshire, Dorset, Hampshire, Isle of Wight and Wiltshire</b>
<b>Wales</b>	<b>Includes all the Welsh local authorities</b>
<b>Yorkshire</b>	<b>East, North, South and West Yorkshire</b>

# National Pest Technicians Association

Counties within England, Scotland and Wales subject of the National Rodent Survey 2006  
 Map of Northern Ireland not shown, although included in survey.

## England

2	Beds	Bedfordshire
3	Berks	Berkshire
5	Bucks	Buckinghamshire
6	Cambs	Cambridgeshire
8	Ches	Cheshire
9	Cleve	Cleveland
11	Cnwill	Cornwall
12	Cumb	Cumbria
13	Derbys	Derbyshire
14	Devon	Devon
15	Dorset	Dorset
17	Dur	Durham
19	E Susx	East Sussex
20	Essex	Essex
22	Gloucs	Gloucestershire
24	Gt Lon	Greater London
25	Gt Man	Greater Manchester
28	Hants	Hampshire
29	H & W	Hereford & Worcester
30	Herts	Hertfordshire
32	Humb	Humberside
33	IOM	Isle of Man
34	IOW	Isle of Wight
35	IOS	Isle of Scilly
36	Kent	Kent
37	Lancs	Lancashire
38	Leics	Leicestershire
39	Lincs	Lincolnshire
41	Mersyd	Merseyside
43	Norlk	Norfolk
44	Nhants	Northamptonshire
45	Nthumb	Northumberland
46	N York	North Yorkshire
47	Notts	Nottinghamshire
49	Oxon	Oxfordshire
52	Shrops	Shropshire
53	Somset	Somerset
55	S York	South Yorkshire
56	Staffs	Staffordshire
58	Sufflk	Suffolk
59	Surrey	Surrey
61	T & W	Tyne & Wear
62	Warwks	Warwickshire
65	W Mids	West Midlands
66	W Susx	West Sussex
67	W York	West Yorkshire
68	Wilts	Wiltshire



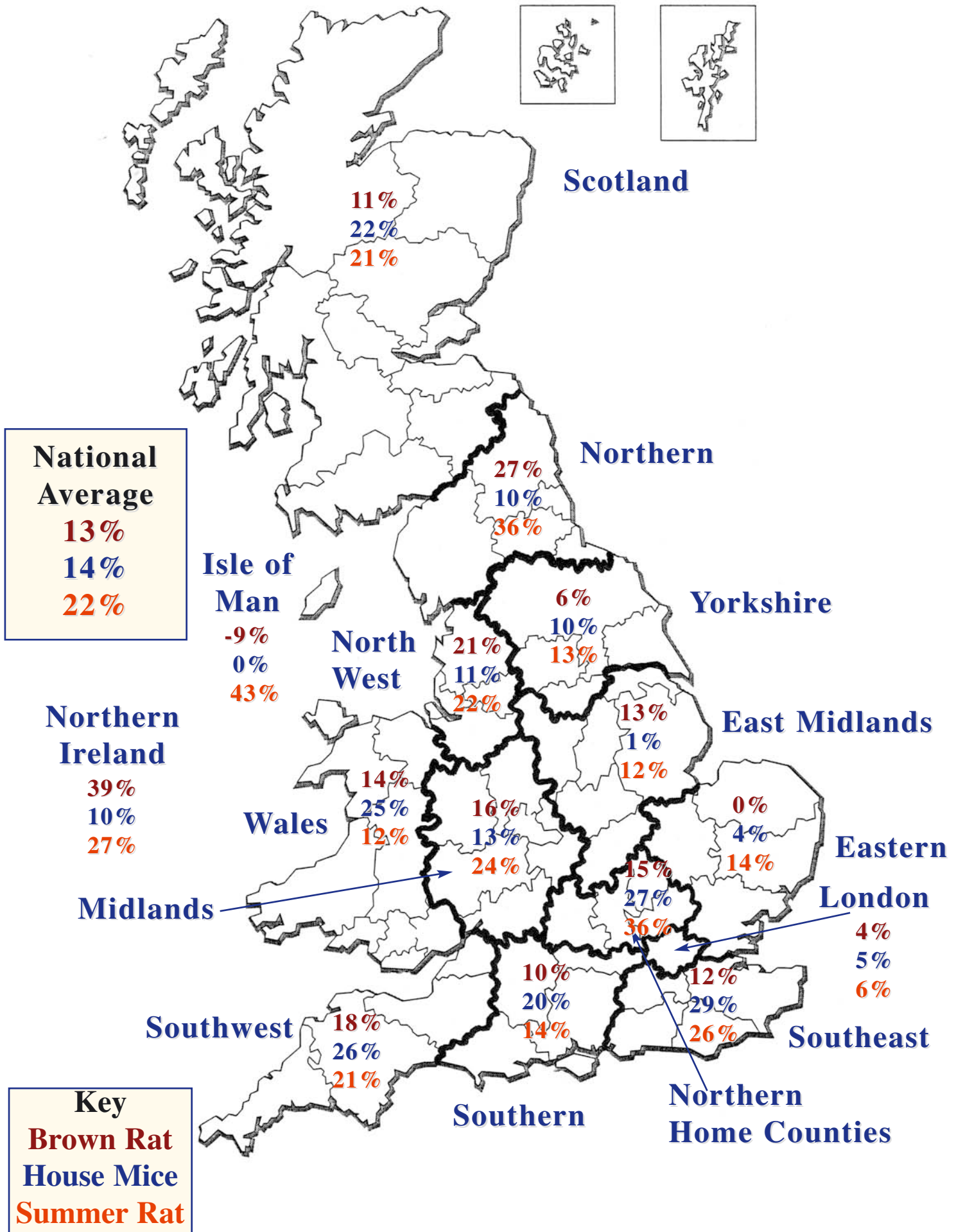
## Scotland

4	Border	Borders
7	Central	Central
16	D & G	Dumfries & Galloway
21	Fife	Fife
23	Gramp	Grampian
31	Highld	Highland
40	Loth	Lothian
48	Ork	Orkney
51	Shet	Shetlands
57	Strath	Strathclyde
60	Tays	Tayside
63	W Isles	Western Isles

## Wales

10	Clwyd	Clwyd
18	Dyfed	Dyfed
26	Gwent	Gwent
27	Gwynnd	Gwynedd
42	Mid Glam	Mid Glamorgan
50	Powys	Powys
54	S Glam	South Glamorgan
64	W Glam	West Glamorgan

# National Pest Technicians Association



# SIX FACTORS THAT WE FEEL ARE CAUSING MAJOR PROBLEMS

Results from any survey findings need interpretation and whilst it is not the intention of the NPTA to point the finger at any one reason or to any one industry for the continuing increase in the Brown Rat population we feel able through the experiences of our members and that of local authority officers, to indicate again several key factors that are playing a vital part.

In previous reports we have listed more causal factors, we feel this year it would be better and more meaningful to concentrate on just six (6) factors which are identified time and time again as causing these year on year increases:

## Charging Policies -

This alarming trend seems to be spreading through Local Authorities within the UK, whose senior officers seem to be revenue driven. Therefore causing more and more people to go over to DIY pest control and without the professional knowledge of PCTs this is a step, in our opinion, in the wrong direction;

**Because of questions asked on the returns form, (which can be seen on page 18) we can now inform readers that the practice of charging within local authorities has now exceeded half of all the authorities taking part in this survey and is now approaching sixty percent of UK authorities.**

## Private Water Companies -

They are responsible for our public sewerage system and time after time it is reported that firstly liaison between water companies and the local authority is not adequate, in fact at times they stop talking to each other. Secondly their refusal time after time to undertake or financially support pro-active treatments is steadily causing serious concern because of its knock on effect against the public's health;

Again, because of serious concerns regarding liaison between water companies and local authorities, as in our previous report a specific question was asked (this can be seen on page 18).

## The Overfeeding of Birds -

More local authorities are reporting that the close association between the overfeeding of wild birds is creating a ready source of rat food;

We wish to emphasise that the NPTA are fully in favour of wild bird feeding, particularly during the colder autumn and winter seasons when insects are not so prolific – what we are finding in practice is that very often feeding becomes **excessive** and surplus food scraps are left lying around, this then becomes another **24/7 attraction** to the resident rodent population.

We also felt it would be of interest to report upon a survey undertaken in August 2006 by the **Western Pest Liaison Group (WPLG)** which covers the south west region of England. They undertook a special survey where all their PCTs who work for nine Local Authorities researched the main reason why rats were present in gardens at premises they visited.

The results, taking into account 4024 reports, found that just over 1414 visits (35%) were to do with the feeding of wild birds in domestic gardens without any approved bird feeding device, therefore food is being thrown or falls onto the ground.

This special survey certainly confirms what the NPTA has been saying for the last four years and hopefully residents themselves can now do their bit to remove this self inflicted cause of the year on year rise in rat numbers.

## Litter, Discarded Food and containers from fast food outlets and Fly Tipping -

All parts of the UK are currently experiencing both litter and fly tipping in growing amounts. Despite larger penalties and the new Clean Neighbourhoods and Environment Act whereby 'fixed penalty' fines can be given to people littering this is not being very successful;

In the Autumn of 2006 the Keep Britain Tidy Group (using the Environmental Campaign Group – known as ENCAMS) undertook a new Campaign and used the close correlation between lots of litter and Fast Food Outlets and the increased number of rat sightings as part of their approach. Interestingly ENCAMS were provided by the NPTA with facts, figures and statistics from our previous six Reports prior to this launch.

## Composting and changes to fortnightly Refuse Collections -

The recycling mania now amongst us is creating a serious knock on problem. Firstly, most compost bins are being placed on 'soft' ground allowing rats to burrow into the bins from below. Secondly, many members of the public are not being instructed on what NOT to place in their compost bins. Here proper and correct advice from the manufacturers and suppliers of the bins is a must. Thirdly, household refuse stored within black plastic bags and overflowing wheelie bins causes another 24/7 source of rodent food.

## Derelict Properties -

Local authorities now have the new legal power to bring empty and derelict dwellings back into occupation. A power that the majority of councils are not apparently yet using.

**It is important to appreciate these are not the only causes of the increases!**

It is vital that readers appreciate that these six factors are not in any order of priority or the only causes of this general increase. We believe it is their combined effects along with many of those comments included in Appendix A from the PCTs undergoing actual 'hands on' pest control within the UK.

During the year 2006 there was an unprecedented media campaign backing the concerns of many members of the public for the changes being made by Councils to household refuse from a weekly collection to a fortnightly collection system. Whilst the main reason for this change, we are told, is the need to bring in greater recycling initiatives by everyone and we certainly applaud this need to recycle materials, we believe it should not be done to the detriment of the removal of ordinary putrescible and organic waste from homes.

We think there must be put in place suitable safeguards such as:

- A. Ensuring the containers provided to householders are big enough and properly secure so that the waste is safely contained.
- B. That special collection facilities must be made available where, particularly in hot summer months, segregated organic household waste is stored to prevent fly infestation.
- C. A need to guard against other pest infestations such as rats, mice and urban foxes.

We believe no Council should institute a fortnightly collection system where wheelie bins are not provided. One should always remember that to support our concerns is the World Health Organisation's (WHO's) advice that states "Municipal waste collection should be at least once a week or once a fortnight in a cold climate"! With the possibility that global warming is all around us these recommendations should seriously be reconsidered here in the UK.

## Our Conclusions

1. Certainly we don't wish to be alarmist **but the signs are not good!** This 2006 report has identified another increase in 'Brown Rat infestations' to the tune of **13%**, meaning that we now have evidence of a year on year increase over the seven years of **39%**.

**This is most unfortunate news as since the NPTA started this annual survey we had shown a slow but steady reduction in the annual Brown Rat infestation numbers, from a huge 18% increase in 1999 to lower figures of between 2% to 5%. Then thankfully in 2005<sup>2</sup> we even reported a dip of minus 8%! We had hoped this was the beginning of good news for everyone. It was not to be!**

2. Similarly, with the "Summer Rat" problem, with just two exceptions when in 2001 and 2005 we reported a 1% and 12% reduction respectively, we are back to an increase. Sadly for this year's Report we have a huge **22%** increase and this now brings us to a massive **69%** year on year increase. Whilst we have never professed to know how many individual rats there are in the UK (no-one has yet ever undertaken a census!) in very simplified figures that means that over the whole of the UK if we start off with a base-line of 1 million rat infestations reported in 1999 we now find that in the past 7 years this has increased to at least **1.69 million infestations. Far, far too many to ignore!**

3. Unfortunately mice have now joined this trend of increases despite year on year decreases generally from 1999 until 2003. The total apparent increase in mice infestation treatments now shows a **12.5%** increase over the whole of the seven years. A word of caution we feel we should make at this point and that is DIY pest control, unless properly conducted by someone who is suitably trained could bring in its wake many problems. **Only time will tell.**

4. By the time this Report is actually printed and published we will be in the seventh year of the (21st)

twenty-first century and what we are finding?

\* **A continuing growth in rat numbers.**

\* **That more and more mice infestations are being reported.**

Surely in the UK with its greatly developed infrastructures originally put in place to protect the public's health since the middle of the nineteenth century when we had the first **Public Health Act of 1848** something is wrong?

5. We would like to ask readers of this report to start asking questions within their own offices and departments about their current working practices including liaison functions, especially to do with the privatised water companies and also within their boardrooms, if there is anything that could be changed for the better? Perhaps if this is done and we go back to some long established good public health preventative practices, between us we could reverse this trend?

6. More and more people both here and around the world are using the World Wide Web and consequently may be seeing this report for the very first time electronically. With this knowledge during the year 2006 the NPTA completely revised and redesigned its website using the same address at [www.npta.org.uk](http://www.npta.org.uk). To this end anyone with the use of the ADOBE® Acrobat ® software the report may now be downloaded free of charge.

**J. Barrie Sheard FCIEH**

**Current Chairman of the NPTA**

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Photographs courtesy - **John Powell** Board Member

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## **Water UK and the Rats in Sewers Protocol**

Last year we reported upon a most interesting development regarding the UK Sewer Protocol, in that commencing in 2004 the Association of London Environmental Health Manager's Group (**LEHMG**) had met with Thames Water and taken unilateral action and developed their own London based Sewer Protocol.

Actual progress reports on this development are hard to come by, but we are led to believe that in 2007 Thames Water are bringing in new pest control contracts for their sewers. It is to be hoped that these will change the priorities currently being worked to. Only time will tell.

Because of the general interest shown over the whole of the UK on this particular matter we have set aside within **Appendix A** a special section dealing exclusively with matters raised that relate to the privatised water companies by a selection of Councils.

## **APPENDIX A**

### **Comments from local authority officers and PCTs**

Because of the great positive feed back we always achieve from local authority officers and PCTs responsible for pest control we asked them to "detail any comments you feel may be relevant to be included in the final report".

### **Part 1                      Comments that relate to general pest control**

Mice complaints up by a third but treatments down due to cost to Council tax payers.

**Reducing rat populations will only occur with the help of the water companies. Regular sewer baiting sustained over several years would have a significant effect.**

From 01/04/06 we have introduced charges and already have seen a 50-70% reduction in requests for treatment. I hope the gross annual reduction will not be viewed as an overall reduction in the number of rats, simply a reduction in requests for treatment!

**Increase due to change in refuse collection to once a fortnight.**

Unprecedented increase in rat treatments due to irresponsible action of a local waste transfer site in the way in which they closed and removed waste from old to new site.

**Charging for mice began on 01/04/06 so no impact on this report for 2005. I expect a large impact in mouse treatments for next year's figures.**

Home composting, feeding of birds and drainage defects all causes of increase in our figures.

**Increase in awareness of service provided. Litter and food waste from increase in number of fast food take-aways.**

A decrease in our rat numbers could be because a charge for this service was introduced.

**Reduction in sewer rodent control due to shortage of staff.**

Changing farm practices and weather conditions.

**Increase generally due to bird feeding in nearly all gardens and access to food all the year round.**

More people feed birds in the garden (household scraps and bird food). More people have compost bins and don't turn them regularly.

**Increased litter especially from 'fast food' outlets and fly tipping. 2005 saw a 100% increase in advice calls for all rodent treatments. Most people refuse to pay for mice treatments and self treat.**

Increase due to compost bins and bird feeders.

**Numbers continue to fall since introduction of charges.**

Increase through reduction in pro-active treatments, reduced staffing levels, increase in take-away food outlets.

**The public are more willing to report rodents than perhaps they used to be a few years ago. Domestic repair of building has declined in recent years and this has resulted in marginally more reports of rodent infestations.**

Increases due to bird feeders and more and more compost bins.

**Increases due to bird feeding, milder winters, continual use of black plastic refuse sacks, fast food shop / take away food waste.**

Our data shows a steady decrease in complaints from a peak in January 2001 to a low in August 2004. 2005 data indicates an increase back to 2003 levels especially in relation to "summer rats".

**This authority has started to implement "wheelie bins" throughout the Borough – should be complete in August 2006. Hopefully this will reduce food sources for rodents and reduce infestation increases in rats. Councils still using black plastic bags for refuse collection still provide lots of foods for rodents.**

The increased wealth of people is leading to increase in waste of food onto composts and the over-feeding of wild birds.

**The overall picture may be obscured as the number of treatments may be affected because we now charge.**

We firmly believe that compost bins not properly sited on either grass or soft ground is allowing rats in large numbers to tunnel under the edges and thus providing a lot of suitable harbourage for them to increase in numbers.

**The last few years have seen an increase in both rat and mouse treatments. We believe that the increase in rat treatments has been due to a lack of sewer baiting. However, this year 2006 we have re-introduced sewer baiting and therefore hope to see a decline in the rat population.**

Although not causing a major increase in infestations, PCT's and EHO's are increasingly having to deal with rat infestations caused by people leaving large quantities of bird feed out. You may be interested to learn this Council although charging for treatments provide a service to undertake a rodent survey for FREE!

**We believe the main reason in increased sightings are the water authority's and rail network's refusal to pro-actively bait their land or networks in known 'hot spot' areas.**

Development of a pro-active rat control strategy that has included using ferrets and shooting in the control of rats at the appropriate time and place.

**We are finding that many homes today have both decking and water features that attract rats.**

Decrease in infestations in this area is brought about by more programmed and active sewer baiting and general clean-up of streets and the enforcement of removal of litter deposits.

**In East Anglia generally there have been many changes in farming practices which create ready source of more rodent meals at all times.**

## **Part 2                      Comments that relate to privatised Water Companies**

Liaison with South West Water has not improved.

**There should be national co-ordination between LA's and statutory sewerage undertakers.**

Liaison with both Yorkshire Water and Northumbrian Water has improved.

**United Utilities (covering Greater Manchester area, Lancashire and Merseyside) have not requested this authority to treat sewers, we would be happy to carry out treatments if requested.**

The liaison with Anglian Water has become increasingly strained over the last 12 months.

**Liaison with Southern Water has not improved.**

Regarding the "rats in sewers protocol" with United Utilities – liaison not improved whatsoever!

**Although we have regular meetings with Thames Water Utilities, sewer baiting is not pro-active. I do not believe that they carry out sewer baiting on a regular basis.**

Liaison with Severn Trent has not improved – it used to be good, with money available virtually "on request" but a change in personnel at the water company has resulted in no procedure to be able to make requests.

**No liaison with Scottish Water.**

Thames Water Utilities have made a lot of noise but with no real effect!

**Interestingly it is the County Councils function in this county to co-ordinate sewer baiting on behalf of this authority and Wessex Water.**

No improvement apart from more regular meetings with Thames Water Utilities Limited. Requests for areas to be treated fall on deaf ears. Feed-back indicates treatment has been carried out where requested. Evidence proves beyond all doubt this is not always the case (photographs of site, showing drain covers not lifted). Thames Water reluctant to lift less than 100 covers, not practicable and cost effective.

**Re liaison with South West Water PLC. We always receive a response to our request (after that whether a visit is made, as a result, I do not really know)?**

Yes, we are currently looking at setting up a working group with Yorkshire Water, their contractor and others, plus L.A's in their area to discuss better ways of working.

**Liaison with Severn Trent remains the same and we still receive an annual budget to carry out this work of destroying rats within sewers.**

Liaison with Yorkshire Water has improved slightly.

**Yes liaison has improved with Welsh Water.**

Liaison has not improved with Scottish Water. A letter was sent in mid April 06 regarding the previous joint agreement on rodent control in sewers being continued. A reply was received in mid May 06 stating the matter had been passed to their legal section. Why this needs a legal opinion baffles us!

**Liaison with Anglian Water has not improved. They still refuse to do pro-active baiting and have also 'accidentally' claimed to their customers that we do. There is some very limited re-active baiting carried out by them.**

With Thames Water there has been one meeting. Anglian Water which also covers part of our area are not interested.

**As the officer responsible for pest control I am unaware of any liaison with Anglian Water.**

Anglian Water will not pay for regular sewer baiting, they will only treat if rats are evident and then they do this themselves.

**Liaison with Anglian Water has not improved – No contact at all!**

Liaison with Severn Trent has remained the same – virtually non existent.

**Little or no liaison takes place with Anglian Water.**

Liaison with Anglian Water has not improved. We used to bait annually every town/village in the district. The Water Company will only now bait if we notify them there is a problem. With the other part of the District Severn Trent employ us as contractors for seven villages.

**No improvement in liaison. In fact I would say it's got worse as they are not interested in repairs etc.**

With Thames Water things haven't yet improved but we have made inroads to sorting this out to coincide with Thames Water's new pest control contracts starting in 2007.

**Liaison with Thames Water has improved but not necessarily improved the situation. Partnership working is the way forward.**

Not improved with Thames Water, in fact ceased!

**With Wessex Water we have a partnership agreement for sewer baiting – small scale which equals 100 “lifts” a year.**

Slightly improved with Severn Trent – in they did ask us to provide sewer treatments to a small portion of the District.

**With Severn Trent liaison is good – satisfactory funding is given.**

Despite many calls to Severn Trent we have little joy in getting a response.

**Liaison has improved – Quarterly meetings and a much closer liaison on sewer baiting and surface treatments.**

As we receive the same funding from Severn Trent each year, this means taking into account inflation we now have less man hours available to undertake the sewer baiting.

**No liaison with Wessex Water (no sewer baiting carried out).**

There is very little liaison with Wessex Water. – we are not aware of a problem in our area in the sewers.

**We maintain good relations with Southern Water and carry out annual sewer baiting with them.**

Problems have arisen with Severn Trent with them having had an internal reorganisation, this has now been sorted out.

**Liaison has not improved, in fact we found that the contractor that Thames Water were using was a year behind on treatments.**

Liaison has not improved. In fact Scottish Water replaced a sewer pipe in our District and did not remove the “old” pipe! Since then there has been an ongoing problem with rats in the immediate area.

**Liaison with Northumbrian Water is not the problem – they are always willing to talk. Delivery of promises is erratic.**

Liaison with Northumbrian Water is OK. Lack of treatment at a similar level to previous years when LA carried out is the problem.

**Liaison with Northumbrian Water does not exist. They tell us what the results of their baiting programme are, but otherwise no contact / discussion on anything.**

Liaison with Thames Water has not led to improved co-operation despite our local MP expressing concern to their CEO.

**Liaison with Yorkshire Water similar as before – reasonable. Liaison with United Utilities is poor.**

Protocol established with Yorkshire Water. Have an annual liaison meeting with each LA and they attend our local county pest management committee. Still awaiting better information on baiting areas which we understand will soon be forthcoming.

**No change with liaison, although recent changes in Yorkshire Water personnel “promises” improvements.**

## APPENDIX B

### COPY OF LETTER THAT ACCOMPANIED THIS YEAR'S QUESTIONNAIRE

Date as postmark

Chief Environmental Health Officer for all District & Borough Councils and  
Unitary Authorities within England, Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales  
(or the officer responsible for Pest Control duties within the Authority)

Dear Colleague,

### THE SEVENTH NPTA NATIONAL RODENT SURVEY 2006

It's that time of the year again so can we prevail upon you and your Council to again arrange to complete the enclosed questionnaire which covers the rodent control work that came your Council's way (or your outside contractors) during the years 2004 and 2005?

For the report entitled "National Rodent Survey Report 2004" published in January 2005, we managed a record 69% of returns that gave us meaningful figures that we were able to use. Unfortunately for the last 2005 Report we only managed a 63% return rate, so may we ask for your help and assistance in making this Report another record with say a 75% return?

We have again retained the same basic questionnaire so all we need from you are your latest figures for 2004 and 2005 (or for the financial years 2004-2005 and 2005-2006)

We again had extensive coverage when last year's report was published throughout the length and breadth of the UK and we believe in the vast majority of cases it helped get over to both the general public and to those administrators in areas of decision making that rodent control is still a major health preventative measure that assists the public's health.

This year we wish to spend some time researching the vexed problem of charging for rodent work undertaken at dwelling houses. We sincerely believe it may be hiding a serious problem of increasing rodent populations. We would welcome your considered views and opinions.

Part of the great success of the last five reports has been the inclusion at Appendix A of officer's comments, both good and bad, of the current pest management situation. We firmly believe these comments brought the Survey Report to life. Your personal views will assist us to publish a meaningful and interesting report.

Many thanks in advance for your assistance in this matter and we look forward to receiving your response within the next six weeks and by the end of September at the latest.

Yours sincerely

John A. Davison – Chief Executive

# APPENDIX C

## NPTA NATIONAL RODENT SURVEY 2006

PLEASE NOTE THIS SURVEY ONLY RELATES TO RODENT COMPLAINTS AND INITIAL TREATMENTS

Please give annual totals from **January 1st to December 31st in 2004 and in 2005**

However, if your statistical year is April 1st to March 31st please delete line below \*

\*Figures cover January 1st – December 31st each year\*

**OR** April 1st 2004 – March 31st 2005 and then April 1st 2005 – March 31st 2006

<b>Brown Rat</b> ( <i>Rattus Norvegicus</i> )	2004	2005
Total number of complaints/ requests for treatments where a treatment was carried out		

Figures cover January 1st – December 31st each year\*

**OR** April 1st 2004 – March 31st 2005 and then April 1st 2005 – March 31st 2006

<b>House Mouse</b> ( <i>Mus domesticus</i> )	2004	2005
Total number of complaints/ requests for treatments where a treatment was carried out		

### SUMMER BROWN RAT ACTIVITY

Whilst in the two Survey years 2001 and in 2005 we had a reduction in Summer Rat infestations the other four year's Reports confirmed that there had been an increase, now giving a year on year 47% total increase since 1998 of Brown Rat activity within the United Kingdom in the summer months. We wish to investigate if this trend has continued during the Summer of 2005.

April 1st – September 30th 2004 and April 1st – September 30th 2005

(NOTE: The summer months ONLY)

<b>Brown Rat</b> ( <i>Rattus Norvegicus</i> )	2004	2005
Total number of complaints/ requests for treatments where a treatment was carried out		

In the last five Reports many useful and professional comments were added by local authority officers along with their statistics.

May we again seek everyone's views (both good and bad) for this year's report?

Please see overleaf for a few special questions about your Council's charging policy for both rats and mice in dwelling houses

-----  
PLEASE ANSWER THIS YEAR'S SPECIAL QUESTIONS UPON YOUR COUNCIL'S CHARGING POLICY.

1. Does your Council currently charge for undertaking rat and / or mice infestations within dwelling houses?

RATS & MICE YES / NO      RATS ONLY YES / NO      MICE ONLY YES / NO

2. What are these charges? (a) For rat treatments?.....(b) For mouse treatments? .....

3. Are there any free or subsidised treatments carried out? YES / NO

IF YES CAN YOU EXPLAIN THESE EXCEPTIONS PLEASE?

4. Has liaison with your privatised water company on matters regarding "rats in sewers" improved or not since the last Rodent Survey was undertaken? Name of your water company please.....

PLEASE ALSO DETAIL BELOW ANY OTHER COMMENTS YOU FEEL MAY BE RELEVANT THAT COULD EXPLAIN THE REASONS FOR THE INCREASE OR DECREASE IN RODENT NUMBERS IN YOUR AUTHORITIES AREA.....

# APPENDIX D                      PART 1

## LIST OF LOCAL AUTHORITIES WHO RESPONDED TO 2006 NATIONAL RODENT SURVEY QUESTIONNAIRE

### **Eastern Region**

Babergh, Basildon, Braintree, Breckland, Brentwood, Cambridge City, Castle Point, Chelmsford, Colchester, East Cambridgeshire, Epping Forest, Fenland, Harlow, Huntingdonshire, Ipswich, Kings Lynn & West Norfolk, Maldon, Peterborough City, Rochford, South Cambridgeshire, South Norfolk, Southend, Suffolk Coastal, Thurrock, Waveney, Uttlesford.

### **East Midlands Region**

Amber Valley, Ashfield, Bassetlaw, Blaby, Bolsover, Broxtowe, Charnwood, Chesterfield, Corby, Daventry, Derbyshire Dales, East Lindsey, East Northamptonshire, Gedling, High Peak, Hinkley & Bosworth, Kettering, Leicester City, Lincoln City, Melton, Newark and Sherwood, Northampton, North East Lincolnshire, North Kesteven, Nottingham City, Oadby & Wigston, Rushcliffe, Rutland, South Derbyshire, South Holland, South Kesteven, Wellingborough, West Lindsey.

### **Isle of Man Region**

Department of Local Government & the Environment.

### **London Region**

London Boroughs of Camden, Croydon, Ealing, Enfield, Harrow, Hounslow, Islington, Lewisham, Merton, Newham, Redbridge, Sutton, Tower Hamlets, Waltham Forest and the Corporation of London.

### **Midlands Region**

Birmingham, Bromsgrove, Cannock Chase, Cheltenham, Cotswold, Coventry, East Staffordshire, Forest of Dean, Gloucester City, Malvern Hills, Newcastle under Lyme, North Warwickshire, Rugby, Sandwell, Shrewsbury & Atcham, Solihull, South Gloucestershire, South Shropshire, Stafford, Staffordshire Moorlands, Stoke on Trent City, Stroud, Walsall, Warwick, Wolverhampton, Wychavon, Wyre Forest.

### **North Western Region**

Blackburn with Darwen, Blackpool, Burnley, Bury, Chester, Chorley, Congleton, Crewe and Nantwich, Ellesmere Port and Neston, Fylde, Knowsley, Lancaster City, Liverpool City, Macclesfield, Manchester City, Oldham, Pendle, Preston City, Ribble Valley, Rochdale, Rossendale, Salford, Sefton, South Ribble, St. Helens, Trafford, Vale Royal, West Lancashire, Wigan, Wirral, Wyre.

### **Northern Region**

Alnwick, Barrow, Berwick upon Tweed, Blyth Valley, Carlisle, Chester le-Street, Durham, Easington, Gateshead, Hartlepool, Middlesbrough, Newcastle upon Tyne, Sedgfield, South Lakeland, Stockton-on-Tees, Sunderland, Teesdale, Wansbeck, Wear Valley.

## **Northern Home Counties Region**

Aylesbury Vale, Broxbourne, Cherwell, Dacorum, East Herts, Luton, Milton Keynes, North Herts, Oxford City, South Bedfordshire, South Oxfordshire, St. Albans, Stevenage, Three Rivers, Vale of White Horse, Watford, Welwyn Hatfield, West Oxfordshire, Wycombe.

## **Northern Ireland**

Ards, Belfast City, Castlereagh, Fermanagh, Omagh. NOTE: The Southern Group Environmental Health Services (which cover Armagh, Banbridge, Craigavon, Dungannon and Newry & Mourne District Councils no longer provide a pest control service).

## **Scotland**

Aberdeen City, Aberdeenshire, Angus, Argyll and Bute, Dumfries and Galloway, Dundee City, East Ayrshire, East Dunbartonshire, East Renfrewshire, Edinburgh City, Fife, Highland Council, Inverclyde, Midlothian, North Ayrshire, North Lanarkshire, Orkney Islands, Renfrewshire, South Ayrshire, Stirling, West Dunbartonshire, West Lothian.

## **South East Region**

Adur, Ashford, Canterbury, Chichester, Crawley, Dartford, Dover, Eastbourne, Elmbridge, Epsom & Ewell, Gravesham, Guildford, Horsham, Lewes, Maidstone, Medway, Mid Sussex, Mole Valley, Reigate & Banstead, Runnymede, Sevenoaks, Shepway, Spelthorne, Tandridge, Thanet, Tonbridge & Malling, Tunbridge Wells, Waverley, Wealden, Worthing.

## **South Western Region**

Bath & North East Somerset, Bristol City, Carrick, East Devon, Exeter City, Kerrier, North Somerset, Plymouth, Restormel, South Somerset, Taunton Deane, Teignbridge, West Devon, West Somerset.

## **Southern Region**

Basingstoke, Bournemouth, Bracknell Forest, Christchurch, East Dorset, East Hampshire, Eastleigh, Fareham, Havant, Kennet, New Forest, North Dorset, North Wiltshire, Poole, Portsmouth, Purbeck, Rushmoor, Salisbury, Southampton, Swindon, Test Valley, West Berkshire, West Dorset, West Wiltshire, Weymouth & Portland, Winchester, Windsor & Maidenhead, Wokingham.

## **Wales**

Blaenau Gwent, Bridgend, Caerphilly, Cardiff, Conwy, Flintshire, Isle of Anglesey, Merthyr Tydfil, Monmouthshire, Neath Port Talbot, Newport, Pembrokeshire, Rhondda Cynon Taf, Swansea, Vale of Glamorgan, Wrexham.

## **Yorkshire Region**

Barnsley, Bradford, Calderdale, Craven, Doncaster, Hambleton, Harrogate, Kingston upon Hull, Kirklees, Richmondshire, Rotherham, Ryedale, Selby, Sheffield City, Wakefield, York City.

## APPENDIX D                      PART 2

### INTERESTING FACTS FROM THE RETURNS

We felt it very appropriate to bring to your attention that certain counties within the twelve English Regions managed to provide an excellent response rate; we believe these counties need to be highly commended.

**Those with a 100% response rate are:**

- \* **Cambridgeshire in the Eastern Region**
- \* **Isle of Man Region**
- \* **Merseyside within the North West Region**
- \* **Oxfordshire within the Northern Home Counties Region**
- \* **Both Dorset and Wiltshire in the Southern Region**
- \* **South Yorkshire in the Yorkshire Region**

**Those Counties who achieved a very high response rate are:**

Essex and Lancashire a 93% response rate  
Kent a 92% response rate  
Hertfordshire a 90% response rate  
Nottinghamshire an 88% response rate  
North Yorkshire and Somerset an 87% response  
Hampshire, Northamptonshire and West Sussex 85%  
Surrey and West Yorkshire an 80% response rate

**The NPTA would like to congratulate the above for their outstanding commitment in helping to make this annual report worthwhile**

## APPENDIX E- REFERENCES

- 1 NPTA National Rodent Survey 2000 – published - November 2000**
- 2 NPTA National Rodent Survey 2005 – published - January 2006**
- 3 Personal correspondence from several private Pest Control Servicing Companies who work under a Local Authority contract**

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