

NYC effort put rats on the run

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Eradication program saw active rat signs drop from 9.75 percent to 4.5 percent, report says.

(HealthDay)—A rat control strategy launched in the Bronx, N.Y., led to a 54 percent reduction in the number of properties with signs of rat activity, a new federal report says.

The New York City Department of Health conducted repeat inspections of nearly 30,000 properties from 2007 to 2009. Active rat signs were found at 9.75 percent of the properties at the start of the program, compared with 4.51 percent after the final round of inspections.

This new method featured block-by-block inspections to find and correct conditions that foster rat infestations in neighborhoods. Inspectors used handheld computers to record signs of rats—such as droppings, gnaw marks and burrows—as well as property conditions that provide rats with ready sources of food and shelter, according to the report by the U.S. [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#).

The inspectors created a community-wide record of rat activity by

uploading their findings into a [central database](#). All the findings were published on the online "rat information portal."

Property owners were sent detailed notices if their properties had signs of rat activity, along with instructions on how to deal with the problem. If property owners failed to take action, the city inspectors deployed staff members licensed as pest control professionals to re-inspect and, if necessary, apply poisoned rat bait.

In some cases, health department staffers cleaned properties to remove large amounts of garbage or to eliminate conditions that encouraged rats.

If a single property owner takes steps to eliminate [rats](#), the rodents are often driven to adjoining properties. But when a neighborhood takes action to eliminate sources of food and shelter, the rat [population declines](#), noted Caroline Bragdon and colleagues at the NYC Department of Health's Division of Environmental Health.

The findings are published in the Sept. 21 issue of the CDC's [Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report](#).

More information: The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has more about [rodent control](#).

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