



Features of a Good Service Agreement for the Control of Rats

Service agreements are key to a successful partnership among building owners, managers, maintenance staff and exterminators or pest management professionals (PMPs.)

The Health Department recommends that service agreements be discussed prior to the initiation of rat control. This fact sheet provides information on typical features of a rat control service agreement. It can be used by both owners and pest professionals.

Service agreements should at least include the following provisions:

1. Inspection of the property to determine the source(s) and the cause(s) of the rat infestation.
 - For buildings, inspections should include the exterior, yard, basement and any garbage storage areas.
 - For lots or landscaped property, the inspections should include all areas.
2. Written reports provided to the customer from each inspection visit that include recommendations for structural, mechanical or operational improvements to help control rats.
3. Agreement on frequency of visits that will be made by the PMP.
4. Assurances that all poison baits or traps will be placed in locations completely inaccessible to people, children, pets, and wildlife or installed inside heavy-duty plastic or metal tamper-resistant bait stations that are secured to the ground, fence or some other stationary object.
5. Copies of the label or Materials Safety Data Sheet of any pesticide used, and the details of the amount and location any baits used.
6. Provision of a “warranty for work performed” dependant on follow-through by the customer of recommendations received from the servicing professional.
7. Compliance with all applicable federal, state and local laws and regulations.

Tailoring Service Agreements for Different Situations

How often a Pest Management Professional (PMP) visits, inspects and treats a property depends on the severity of the infestation and the location and use of the property. For example, a restaurant or apartment building in a neighborhood where rats have been reported should have a service agreement that provides more frequent visits than a single-family home in an area with few rats.

Service Visit Options

For Minor or Temporary Rat Infestations

- Usually 3 to 4 visits over the course of two weeks are required to correct the rat problem and confirm the infestation has been eliminated.

For Severe or Chronic Rat Infestations

- Initially, the PMP should make frequent visits to bring the infestation under control. This “knockdown phase” or “clean out” typically lasts six weeks, but may last longer depending on the severity of the problem. After that, the PMP should make monthly service visits.

1) The Knockdown Phase:

The initial service usually requires 5 to 6 service visits over the first 1-2 months to get control of most of the rats. This initial service schedule can be as follows:

Week 1:

- Inspection of property
- Installation of rat control products (bait stations, traps and or rat bait in burrows)
- Recommendations to the owner about their role in rat management (e.g. clean-up, filling holes in buildings, beneath doors, etc.)

Weeks 2-3:

- Re-inspection of the property to measure progress
- Checking and replacement of rat bait
- Removal of dead rats
- Closure and collapse of any burrows that no longer have active rats.

Weeks 4-6:

- Inspection every two weeks until rat activity has ceased

2) The Maintenance Phase:

To maintain control of rat infestations, many companies offer “maintenance contracts” after the cleanout is completed. Maintenance contracts are usually offered as monthly service when the building is located in a neighborhood containing high rat pressure, and/or the building cannot be made rat proof. Where rat occurrences are few, maintenance contracts may be offered on a quarterly basis instead of a monthly service.

Examples of Bait Application Services

Indoor Services for Rat Infestations

- Professionals often use a combination of snap traps and baits applied according to the label.
- Careful monitoring of rat control products is essential.
- Building occupants must be notified of every application, and location of any traps through the building manager.
- A copy of the label and/or Material Safety Data Sheet of the products used should be maintained in the building manager’s offices.

Exterior Services for Rat Infestations

- Depending on the infestation, PMPs may use a combination of tamper-resistant bait stations and the application of bait into active rat burrows, with the number of bait stations and applications based on the severity of the infestation.

Installation and Maintenance of Bait Stations

- The number and distance between bait stations should be based on the severity of infestation (see below for an example):

Severity Level of Rats	Distance between bait stations	Service Intervals
Minor	75 feet	Monthly
Moderate	50 feet	Twice monthly
Severe	25 feet	Weekly

Treating Active Rat Burrows

In cases where an area or building's exterior has active rat burrows, the PMP may schedule 5-6 visits over 4-6 weeks. A typical schedule can be similar to the following:

Week 1:

- Inspection of the building's exterior and identification of active rat burrows.
- Application of bait with funnels.
- Insertion deep down into the burrow so that the bait is inaccessible to pets or children.

Week 2:

- 7-10 days are required for bait to take effect.
- After bait has had a chance to take effect, the previously baited burrows can be closed by completely collapsing the hole and tamping down the earth around it or filling it in with fresh dirt.
- Inspection for any new activity with the application of new bait as necessary.

Weeks 3-4:

- The area is checked for re-opened burrows.
- Any active burrows are re-baited.
- The burrows baited in the previous week are closed.
- Inspection for any new activity.

Weeks 5-6:

- PMP should confirm control of the area by checking to make sure there are fewer active burrows, and that no new burrows have emerged.
- If rats are under control, the area can be switched to a monitoring schedule (monthly visits with bait stations.)
- If rats are still active, weekly schedules should be maintained (as per weeks 3 and 4, above) and baiting continued, until rats are under control.