



INFORMATION REPORT

TO:	Mayor and Members Board of Health
COMMITTEE DATE:	October 16, 2017
SUBJECT/REPORT NO:	Trends and Response to Rats in Hamilton BOH15020(a) (City Wide) (Outstanding Business List Item)
WARD(S) AFFECTED:	City Wide
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SUBMITTED BY & SIGNATURE:	Kevin McDonald A/Director, Healthy Environments Public Health Services Department

Council Direction:

The Board of Health at its June 15, 2015 meeting approved Trends and Response to Rats in Hamilton, BOH15020 (City Wide) which contained the following recommendations:

- (a) That Public Health Services develop additional rat control resources for homeowners based on best practices of integrated pest management; and
- (b) That Public Health Services, Planning & Economic Development, and Public Works continue to coordinate efforts to respond to rat complaints, including the use of by-law enforcement and targeted sewer baiting, as part of a comprehensive integrated pest management plan.

This report fulfils that request and the items can be removed from the outstanding business list.

Information:

Several resources were developed by Public Health Services in response to the increase in rat complaints; the resources as well as statistics and response rates are discussed, below.

Public Health Services (PHS), Planning & Economic Development (PED), and Public Works (PW) work together to discuss proactive measures involving planning applications, construction contracts and the Light Rail Transit (LRT) project, and are providing input into the development of a new draft pest by-law. Work also continues with referrals by PHS to PW for sewer baiting and referrals to Municipal Law Enforcement (MLE) for Property Standards for rat related property issues including long grass, garbage, and potential rat harbourage.

Resources

Rat behaviours are driven by their need for food, water and shelter and rats have learned to depend on cities and people to help meet those needs. No one wants rats so it is important that rat resources are available to the community.

In 2014 rat information resources were outdated and there was no City of Hamilton webpage about rats as rat complaint numbers were low. Since 2015, Public Health Services has developed several rat control resources both in electronic format and in print.

See Appendix A to Report BOH15020(a) – Trends and Response to Rats in Hamilton - Rat Resources for a description of each resource including:

Electronic

- Rats! YouTube Video
- Website updates
- Social Media- Twitter and Facebook
- Councillor Newsletters
- Vets and Pet Owners Outreach

Print (also available in electronic format)

- Property Standards “Bylaw 100” Door to Door Flyer/Handout
- Rat/Mice Factsheet

Best practices for rat control focus on reducing or eliminating food, water, and shelter through an integrated pest management approach. Our resources were developed to help our community learn more about how to identify rats and rat activity, to understand rat behaviours, and to take steps to eliminate sources of food, water, and access to shelter. When this integrated pest management approach is used, the use of or need for pesticides is reduced although it is not eliminated.

The risk of disease from rats in Ontario is low so the focus of our resources is about controlling rats rather than about disease transmission. Historically, around the world rats have been implicated in spreading diseases including plague (from rat fleas), and additionally rat urine and faeces can contaminate surfaces, however the emphasis of our resources is on prevention and control.

Response Time and Rat Statistics

Since the June, 2015 report, rat complaints continue to increase from past years. This summer PHS response times changed from two to five business days to five to ten business days. This was due to increased volume of complaints combined with concurrent pressures in provincially mandated program work that have continued into fall.

Hamilton received over 300 complaints (includes repeat complaints at same address) up to September 11th, with more than three months remaining in the year. In August there were close to 100 complaints compared to approximately 40 in August last year. Figure 1 and Figure 2 show complaints for the past five years and the upward trend throughout 2017.

Figure 1 - Rat Complaints in Hamilton, 2012 to September 11, 2017

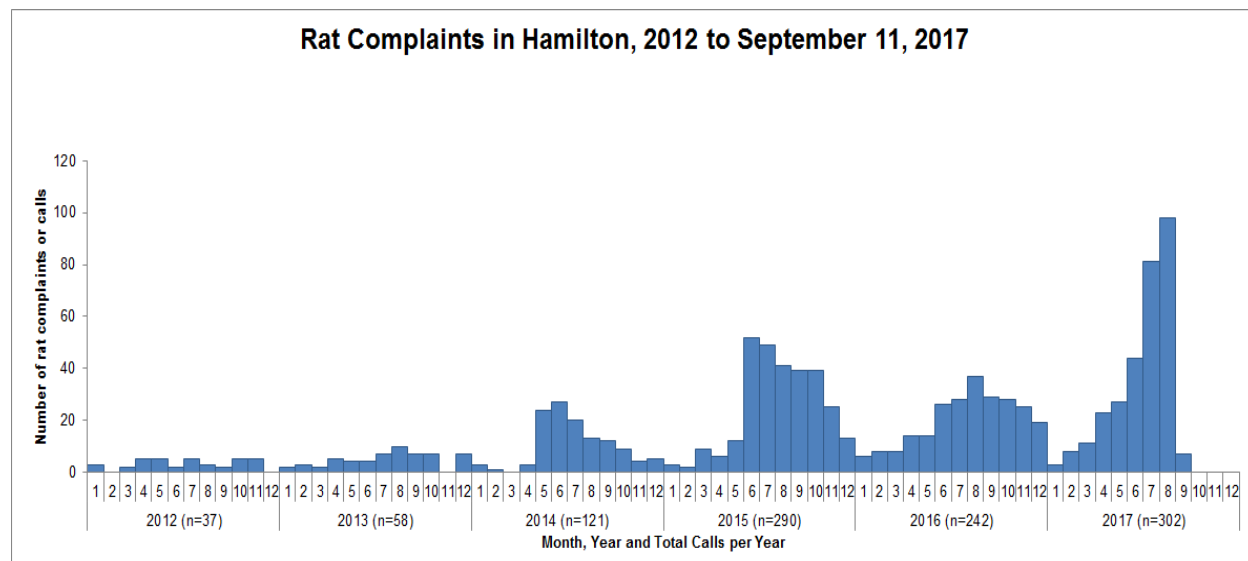
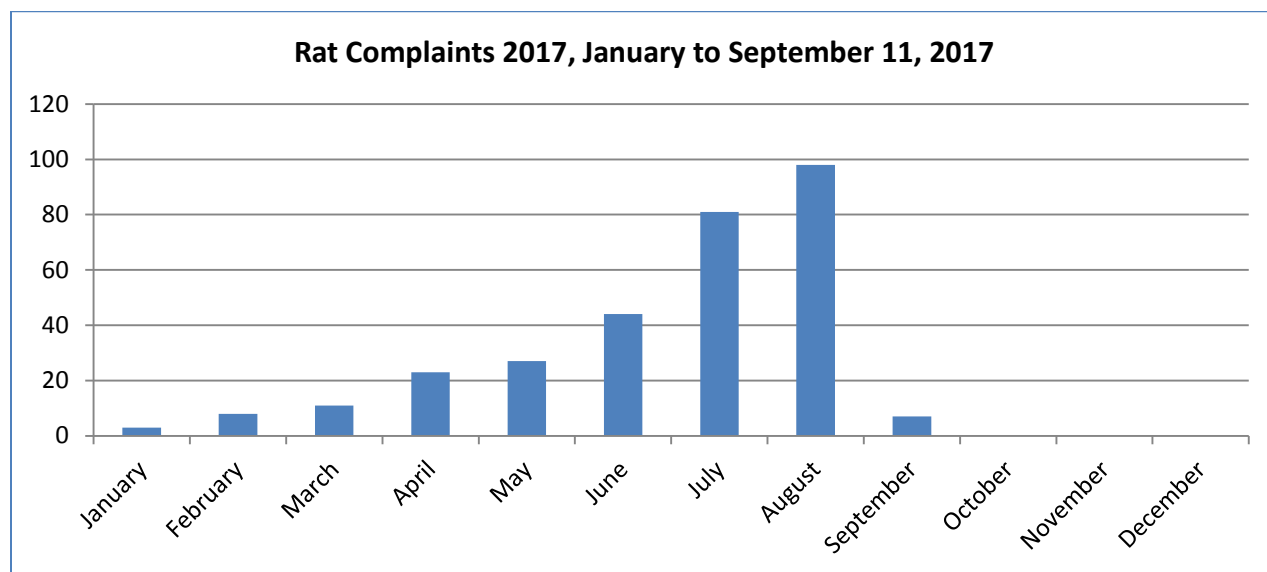


Figure 2 - Rat Complaints 2017, January to September 11, 2017



Although there is a marked increase in rat complaints, Hamilton remains at a much lower rate compared to other jurisdictions contacted through our environmental scan. Three large US cities (New York, Boston, and Chicago), and a smaller (Sault Ste. Marie) and larger city (Ottawa) in Ontario have higher rates. See Table 1.

Table 1 - Rat Complaint rate per 1000 People

City	Population	# Complaints*	Rate Per 1000 People
Hamilton	536,917 (2016)	242	0.45
Ottawa	960,754 (2015)	1,400	1.46
New York	8,406,000 (2013)	29,239	3.48
Boston	645,966 (2013)	3,524	5.46
Sault Ste. Marie	73,368 (2016)	600	8.18
Chicago	2,719,000 (2013)	35,654	13.11

*All 2016 except New York is 2015.

Coordination of Services

Since the 2015 report, PHS expanded the working relationship with PED and PW Departments beyond referrals for property standards issues and sewer baiting to include considering and introducing new proactive measures to further help control rats in the community.

Planning and Economic Development

Pest Control Plan and Planning Applications

Through ongoing collaboration with PED, a new condition by PHS requires that a pest control plan be implemented for applicable construction, demolitions and other planning projects. The pest control plan requires that during every stage of construction, efforts are made to exclude and address concerns around rodents. See Appendix B for the common wording for a pest control plan. This requirement was first introduced in 2015 and forms an important part of an integrated pest management approach to controlling rats. PED and PHS continue to refine the planning application and commenting process.

Municipal Law Enforcement

Public Health continues to refer and involve MLE in rat complaints as it is often found that property standards violations such as long grass/weeds, accumulation of garbage and debris, and feeding of wildlife contribute to, or attract rodents.

Pest By-law Development

MLE is a member of a workgroup with PHS and Legal drafting a stand-alone pest by-law that will include rats. MLE and PHS will be enforcement officers under the by-law and plan to look for efficiencies for an effective administration and enforcement strategy.

Public Works

Construction Projects

In May, 2017, PHS presented to PW Senior Leadership Team about the merits of being proactive by including pest control plans in future construction contract requirements. The pest control plans would include monitoring for rats and if found, taking steps to control dispersal prior to construction and controlling rats on the site prior and during the construction phases. PW was supportive of this change to contracts and will work on implementation as new contracts arise. PHS shared a checklist and other tools to assist with this implementation.

Light Rail Transit (LRT)

In June, PHS met with LRT project staff and Metrolinx to discuss taking a proactive approach for pest control during all phases of construction. Metrolinx confirmed they would be responsive to any rat complaints and will follow any legislated requirements including any by-laws that outline a requirement for a pest control plan.

Sewer Baiting

Another important aspect of an integrated pest management approach includes targeted sewer baiting. When multiple rat complaints occur in Hamilton that involves single streets or larger areas of a neighbourhood, PHS requests PW to target and bait the nearby sewers. PHS and PW developed a referral system to further prioritize sewer baiting based on the extent of infestation in a neighbourhood. This improved communication process will result in better coordination of treatment for neighbourhoods. In 2016, 151 manholes were baited compared to 127 in 2014.

Conclusion:

Other jurisdictions in Ontario are reporting more rat complaints this year than other years and rats may continue to increase in population. We are not alone in the challenge to control rats. Following endorsement of the 2015 BOH Report, PHS prepared resources as outlined in the report and in Appendix A. PHS continues to work with PW and PED to consider and implement ongoing strategies for proactive measures as well as how to best investigate and enforce rat complaints.

Appendices and Schedules Attached:

Appendix A to Report BOH15020(a) - Trends and Response to Rats in Hamilton
Appendix B to Report BOH15020(a) - Trends and Response to Rats in Hamilton