

# Rats! They're back in Bukit Batok

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Rodents spotted in Street 23 area, burrows found on vacant state land managed by HDB

Rats! It looks like Bukit Batok has an infestation problem yet again.

About a year after a major rat infestation on a hilly area near Bukit Batok MRT station in end 2014, rats have been reported around Bukit Batok Street 23 this and last week.

The National Environment Agency (NEA) said about 20 rat burrows were found along a footpath near the See Thian Foh Combined Temple in Street 23 last Thursday. It had also received feedback about rat activity in an industrial estate in the area on Wednesday.

While NEA said rat control works were carried out this week, the rodents were still a problem yesterday at the temple, where the pests have been damaging property and eating food offerings.

Temple volunteers said yesterday that rat infestation has been a problem there since the middle of last year.

"We catch about four or five rats a week. Sometimes, we also use rat poison to ease the problem. Once we found about 20 rats dead behind the temple," said a 73-year-old temple volunteer who gave her name only as Ms Sim.

She showed The Straits Times the rat droppings she came across yesterday in the temple's kitchen.

"I just wiped the stove in the kitchen clean yesterday, but there are rat droppings again today," she added.

The rats appeared to have come from rat burrows found on vacant state land behind the temple.

The managing agent for the land is the Housing Board.

NEA told ST yesterday that it has deployed its pest control operator to help HDB to bring down the rat population at the vacant land.

So far, 40 rats have been caught in one round of operations, using means such as glue boards or traps.

NEA investigations found that the rodents involved are roof rats, whose "main harbourage areas are the trees on the vacant land". The burrows on the ground are their hiding spaces when they are on the ground foraging for food, it added.

NEA said it will continue to help HDB with rat control operations over the next few days. It added it will also work with HDB to put in place a tight rat control regime.

Meanwhile, temple volunteers said the temple has tried to keep the rodents at bay using various methods, including planting sticky traps or installing wire mesh beneath drain covers. Volunteers also caged the temple's plants, to prevent them from being eaten by rats.

A temple volunteer who identified himself only as Mr Leow said the temple sought help from a pest control operator last month.

"They said they could deal with the rats in the temple, but could not exterminate the rats in the land outside the temple, as it was managed by the Government," he said.

Jurong GRC MP Rahayu Mahzam, who oversees the area affected by the rat infestation, said: "Action has been taken promptly on the same day and I will keep a close watch and work with all parties to resolve the issue."

