

Rats have Valleyview residents trapping

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Rattus norvegicus, a Norwegian brown rat. (Witt)

To Valleyview residents, it must seem as though the rats are taking over — lots of them, big Norwegian browns.

“This is crazy,” said Len Shaw, who’s trapped a dozen of them in the last two weeks.

“I’ve lived in Kamloops for 20 years and in Valleyview for 12 years. I’ve never seen a rat in my life. It’s like an explosion of rats.”

His wife, Leslie, contacted the City about the problem but there didn’t seem to be any concern.

“The City said it’s not our problem.”

Shaw has set half a dozen traps — which he sarcastically refers to as a trap line — which kill the animals. He’s had mouse problems before, when a nearby home is knocked down or renovated. If these rats were native packrats, he wouldn’t be concerned.

“It’s kind of weird.”

Not so weird as people might think, said Mary Ellen Dalglish, the resident “ratologist” at Purity Farm & Garden.

“I’ve caught 12 in one day in my barn,” Dalglish said.

In general, they get 15 or more customers a day who come in looking for a remedy for their rat problems. The store sells live and lethal traps.

“We sell a lot of rat control.”

Rats have a relatively short gestation period of 28 days, so populations can quickly explode. Last year, someone in North Kamloops released their pet rats, which were soon getting into compost and reproducing. One woman trapped 15.

Dalglish said Norwegian browns have been showing up more often as of late, probably arriving via railway box cars or in shipping containers from the Coast. Valleyview seems to be one of the hot spots, perhaps due to its proximity to the railway.

“I had one lady in here last night who said there’s even a Facebook page about it. She was from Valleyview ... There definitely are more of them.”

Similarly, Kamloops has seen an increasing number of termites, which were not a problem in the past. The insects are believed to have arrived in shipments of recycled lumber brought in from elsewhere.