

Rise of the rats - city council pest control team deal with growing reports of vermin in homes

By danjmartin, 03 January 2016, Leicester Mercury, Leicester City, UK

Mild weather has been blamed for a surge in the number of reports of rats infesting Leicester homes. Latest figures show that city council pest officers were called to deal with domestic infestations of vermin 2,504 times in 2014/15 - a rise of more than 500 incidents on the previous 12 months and nearly 900 more cases than in 2011/12.



The city council's exterminators did however deal with fewer reports of most other pests.

The number of cases of wasps was 460 compared to 547 the year before and bedbug infestations dropped from 469 in 2013/14 to 374 last year and there were 166 cockroach complaints - a fall of 45.

There were 402 mice calls, compared to 538, and nearly 50 householder complaints about squirrels.

Squirrel - Menace

Experts say the rats are taking advantage of warmer weather.

Geraldine Fleming, team manager for the city council's pest control department, said: "It's difficult to identify one key reason that causes a difference in the number of cases we get. Its usually down to a range of factors.

"Weather certainly has a big influence, though. Last year there were very few wasps around, probably due to a late cold or wet snap in the spring.

"We've also had nothing resembling a real winter yet – and last year's winter was quite mild – which has a big effect.

"Colder weather discourages rats and fleas, so mild winter weather could go some way towards accounting for the continued demand here.

"Sometimes people choose to treat problems themselves first for pests such as wasps, but we find that people are less likely to do this with rats – especially as we do not charge to treat rats in a domestic property.

"People also have the option of using a private pest control service if they wish to."

The council does charge £59 for handling mouse, bedbug and cockroach infestations.

The Mercury previously reported on a rat-infested city council block of flats in Marwood Road, in Leicester's Stocking Farm.

The creatures gnawed through walls, floors and ceilings, chewed on furniture and left droppings and urine on the council tenants' clothes.

Some residents were - with young children - were unable to sleep through worry and the disturbance from the rats skittering around them at night.

An initial attempt to deal with the problem failed because the rats were breeding faster than they could be killed and feeding on their own young.

Workmen eventually cemented up holes in sewer pipes where the rats were getting in.

