

## **Closed businesses warned that rats have hit ‘biblical levels’**

Written by LLB staff reporter 15<sup>th</sup> Feb 21

Numbers of rat infestations in empty and closed buildings in the UK has reach “biblical levels” as Pest Controllers warn landlords and building owners to check premises for infestations well before lockdown restrictions ease.

“The big worry is when shops, restaurants and offices are unlocked in preparation for openings over the next few months, that business owners are going to discover fairly advanced infestations of rats and mice”, explains Jenny Rathbone from Pest.co.uk.

The big freeze, lockdowns and food stockpiling have created the ideal environment for rats and mice to enjoy a little quiet time in vacant buildings – and because many were quickly locked and left, the worry is that infestations will have taken hold.

“Rats will always find something to eat – even a leather sofa will do. So, any property with food left around will attract a rodent and empty buildings and shops are ideal. Rats climb up wastewater pipes easily, and once in an empty building can breed like crazy and cause major damage”, Rathbone added.

Rats especially are very bad news in any commercial building as they chew wires, internet cables, keyboards and electrical wiring. Their bite is in fact six times stronger, relative to their size, than a great white shark and the damage can be severe. Pest controllers have seen evidence of cunning rats moving a crisp packet and placing it over a glue trap, to enable them to travel across it without being caught.

With the closure of food outlets, meaning less food on the street – rats have had to adapt to their new world, moving around to live in empty commercial properties, locked and left by businesses closed by lockdown.

“The worry now is that when lockdown restrictions are eased, and businesses tentatively open up again, that the growing populations of rodents will be discovered. We are gearing up for a busy year in 2021” explains Jenny Rathbone from Pest Controller Pest.co.uk.

The main worries for post lockdown rodent infestations are caused by these factors:

- \* Population: The population of rats in the UK grew 25% in 2020, from 120m in 2019, to 150m in 2020
- \* Resistance: Common pest control methods are less effective caused by rats developing resistance to poisons used to control numbers
- \* Lockdown: Empty buildings are the ideal breeding grounds for rodents