

Norway Rat

The Norway rat is the largest of commensal rodents. They have rather poor vision and are color blind; but their senses of hearing, smell, touch and taste are keenly developed. Touch is via their long whiskers. They are good runners, climbers, jumpers and swimmers. Rats are primarily nocturnal in habit and they are cautious. They shy away from new objects and changes. They will feed on meat, fish and grains. Norway rats will travel between 100-150 feet from their nest for food and water.

Outdoors, Norway rats prefer to nest in burrows in the soil. An opening of greater than ½ inch is required for entry into buildings. Indoors, Norway rats usually nest in basements and the lower portions of buildings in piles of debris or merchandise as long as it is not disturbed. Occasionally they are found in attics, but prefer lower ground levels.

The disease most commonly thought of involving rats is plague, which is transmitted via fleas leaving an infected rat and attacking man. Fortunately, plague has not been found in rats in the United States for many years.

