

PEST FREE HIBISCUS COAST

Backyard Rat Trapping

FAQs



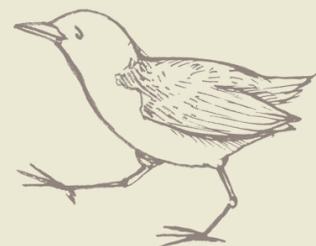
2026

Welcome to our backyard trapping frequently asked questions guide! After 6 years of running our community backyard trapping programme, we have come across lots of common questions that local residents like to ask us. So we thought we'd put our answers together in this handy guide!

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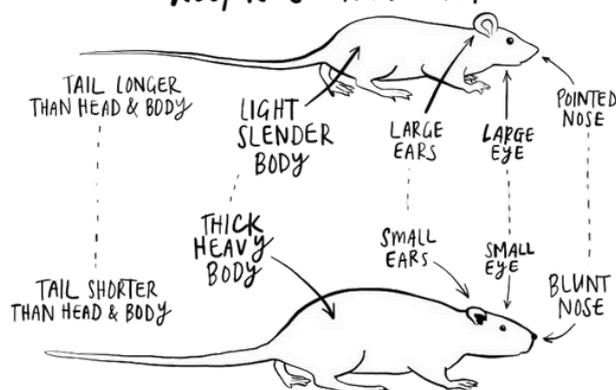
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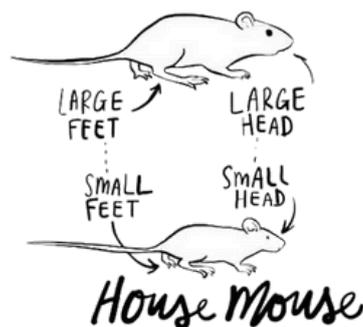
FIELD IDENTIFICATION OF DOMESTIC RODENTS

Roof Rat - RATTUS RATTUS



Norway Rat - RATTUS

young rat



House Mouse

Image by Predator Free New Zealand Trust



Contact Us: pfhc@forestandbird.org.nz



Forest & Bird
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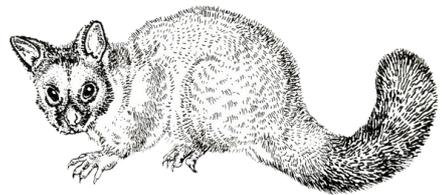
The journey towards a Pest Free Hibiscus Coast



1. “Are we eradicating rats like they did in Miramar, Wellington?”

Not yet, an eradication means getting to zero rats. That not only costs millions of dollars, but also requires a location with extremely low risk of reinvasion. A study was carried out to assess the feasibility of completely removing rats from the peninsula and that isn't currently feasible. However, we are aiming to seek the funding to eliminate possums and / stoats within the next 10 years.

- **Suppression:** Control invasive species with the aim of reducing their numbers to an acceptable level. This makes a big difference to many of our native bird species.
- **Elimination:** Reduce the target pest species to zero detection, accepting that a few individuals may remain or quickly re-establish the area until they are detected and removed through ongoing biosecurity measures.
- **Eradication:** Remove the entire population from an area, with no immediate risk of re-invasion or biosecurity measures to prevent / respond to incursions.



2. “Why do this here? Is the Hibiscus Coast really ratty?”

Yes, it is, when we don't do anything about it - and it's also home to many precious native species. Around 40% of local native birds and even more lizards are at risk. Peninsulas like ours are ideal for pest animal control, and with Shakespear Open Sanctuary and pest-free islands nearby, our efforts help protect and expand safe habitat for native wildlife across the coast. Not only that, will so many families living here, removal of rats makes our homes and businesses safer and healthier. Together we really can make a difference and already have! We have a small team of paid staff, lots of volunteers and hundreds of people trapping in their own backyards - just like you!

A VISION FOR THE HIBISCUS COAST...

A safe, healthy habitat for native plants & animals transitioning from sanctuaries at Tiritiri Matangi & Shakespear, along the peninsula and surrounding areas, enjoyed & cared for by the community.

3. "I have never seen a rat, they must not be around?"

Rats are mainly nocturnal, shy of predators, and travel under cover, so it's common not to see them. They're found in 94% of NZ, including areas where they go unnoticed. Our data from rat catches, tracking tunnels and cameras shows they're present even if unseen, passing through much of the area at different times of year.

Good trap coverage achieved through collective action reduces their numbers and supports native wildlife. If you have followed all our tips for successful trapping and still aren't catching at the moment, please keep your trap set to catch any "tourists" passing through to prevent them accessing unprotected areas where they can breed unchecked.



Hedgehog footprints on tracking cards.

4. "Is trapping dangerous for pets and/or children?"

ALL of our backyard trap models are safely designed and, aside from the yellow traps, should be used in a wooden tunnel that prevents tampering by kids or pets. The yellow Supervisor Max traps only trigger if the lid is fully closed, and the small entrance keeps non-target animals and kids out.



The safety lock inside the Supervisor Max, or the metal mesh on our wooden boxes makes them a safe choice for kids and pets.

5. "What do I do with the dead rat?"

Wearing gloves, dispose of it in your kerb-side bin or bury it. Check traps weekly on bin day to dispose of any catches. Some people bag and freeze them if they are caught before then.

Rats, stoats, possums & hedgehogs kill an estimated 100 MILLION birds, eggs & chicks each year across New Zealand.

6. "What do I use as bait or lure in the trap?"

Get inventive, there are many options; peanut butter (you can add scents like vanilla, aniseed or peppermint to make more enticing and oats to make it more workable), bacon / other meat fat, mayo, liquorice, nuts, cheese, banana, chocolate spread.

Keep it fresh, service your traps regularly.

Ants stealing the bait? Try solid options like nuts pressed on top of some PB. Add a little bait near the entrance. For more ideas check out our social media and talk to your neighbours.



Hazelnut and peanut butter as lure in a Supervisor MAX trap.

Here to help you help nature & your community



7. “I think my cat is catching all the rats so I don’t need to do anything.”

While your cat may bring you the odd rat, research has shown that well-fed domestic cats won’t take on large rats. We have experienced with several local residents who adopt a cat to help with pest control, that the cat makes very little difference. Check out these two trail camera images, same spot and one crazy rat party!

While all cats are different, it is also worth remembering that if your cat is a good hunter it might also be hunting the very birds and lizards you are trapping rats to protect. Consider keeping your cat indoors, for your cat’s safety as well, or create a secure catio for it to enjoy.

More information can be found here:

- www.tiakitamakimaurau.nz/protect-and-restore-our-environment/responsible-pet-ownership/cats/ 
- www.spca.nz/advice-and-welfare/article/keeping-your-cat-safe-and-happy-at-home 



8. “I don’t want to have to clear the trap, I find it difficult, do I have to?”

No problem, and you’re not alone — we have several neighbourhood groups set up so perhaps one of your neighbours might be willing to help you with clearing your trap. Get in touch. You could also consider using a lockable bait station instead. These safely hold rodent bait away from kids and pets and are used by our volunteers in local parks. Contact us if you’d like to [purchase one as well as some poison bait](#)  from your local Forest & Bird Hibiscus Coast Volunteer Branch, and we’ll add you to our list of people baiting.

9. “Nature will take care of itself”/ “I don’t like killing things, do I have to?”

We understand this view. We have a lot of respect for the adaptability of these introduced pest animals, but they don’t belong in Aotearoa New Zealand and are pushing native species toward extinction. Without predator control, nature here can’t balance itself — it’s a choice between protecting our unique wildlife or letting pests take over. We can’t have both. Let’s organise a visit to your place to show you the different pest control tools we have available, or find another role for you in this community-wide effort.

10. I already have my own trap. Is loaning one necessary?"

That's great! Just check with us that it's NAWAC-approved for a humane kill, and keep it clean so it works well. It's really helpful if you can tell us where the trap is so we can add it to our map, and share your catch results with us on this [catch record form](#). 



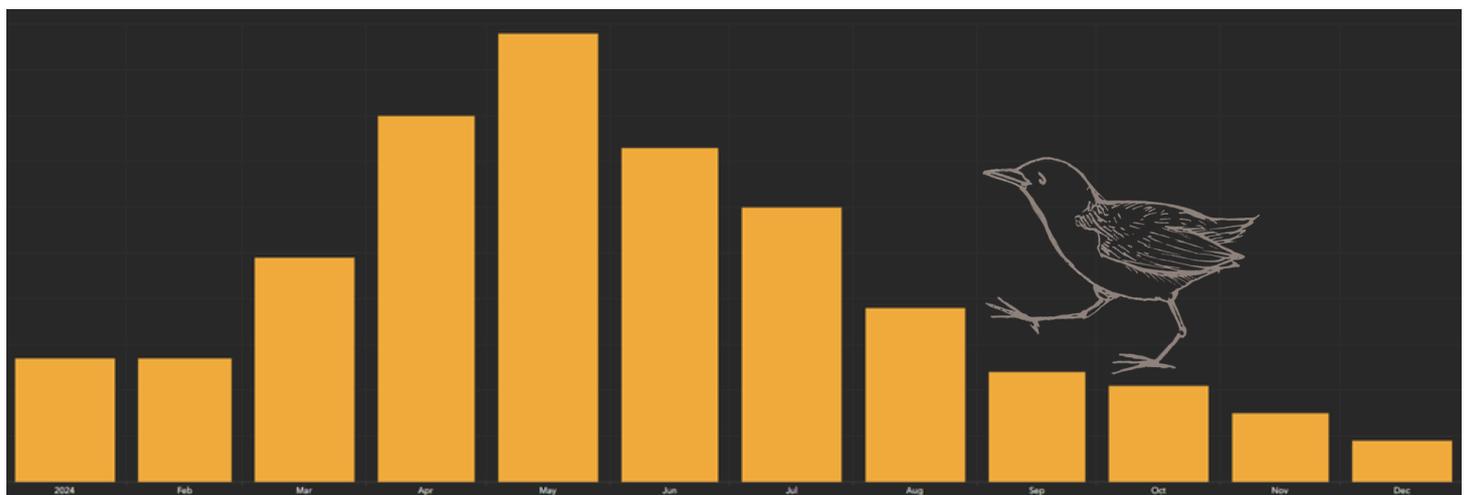
11. "I used to get rats but now I don't — I think they're all gone so I'll stop trapping"

Rats often come and go, and numbers drop in some seasons when natural food is plentiful and they are less likely to take the risk of going in a trap. But they're still around — our catch data from parks and other backyards confirms this.

To boost your chances:

- Change lures, or add another ingredient to your standard lure e.g. a drop of vanilla essence, aniseed oil, or oats. Add a little to the entrance area to entice them in.
- Remove easy food sources like nuts/fruit/compost/pet food/excess chicken feed. (We never recommend wild bird seed anyway).
- Move the trap to somewhere else a rat might scurry, such as parallel to fencelines with a bit of cover, under hedges, or in bushes.
- Make sure it's stable and secure, rats won't enter a wobbly trap
- Ensure the trap is in good working condition, give it a clean and if it's stiff a little vegetable oil can be added to the spring. Some snap traps aren't designed to last for years outside, so if yours is looking worse for wear get in touch and we'll replace it.
- Make sure the entrance hole is smooth with no sharp snags on the mesh.

Remember rat activity is very seasonal, don't be surprised if you don't catch much over the summer, the rats have plenty of food out in the bush. However come autumn and winter they will be hungry and coming closer to your house, trap frequently to get numbers right down in time for spring bird nesting season, and to avoid them coming into your house!



Typical seasonal rat catch trends on the Hibiscus Coast

Troubleshooting: My trap won't set!



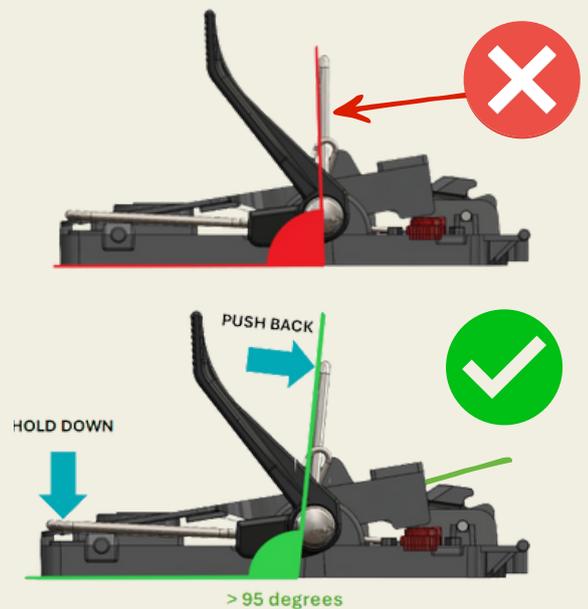
12. Help! My trap won't set!?"

We're happy to replace faulty traps, but if there is no snapped plastic and you've borrowed one of the Envirotools range from us (stainless steel kill bar, with or without yellow hood), please check it isn't one of the five common issues listed here.

1. Is the red slider set to "rat"? These traps won't set unless the red slider is all the way to the left.
2. Is the hood clipped down on both sides? The red safety lock on the inside of the lid won't connect unless the hood is clipped down.
3. Is old bait causing the treadle to stick? Clean traps occasionally to remove old sticky bait residue, simply hose down and scrub, no need for soap.
4. Is the strike bar at an angle of less than 90 degrees? On the yellow traps, the strike bar locks on to the safety lock when set (red clip on the inside of the yellow tunnel lid). When the strike bar is out of alignment (at less than 90°) it will not clip on to the safety lock and the trap will not set.

To fix:

1. Unset the trap and remove the yellow tunnel shroud.
2. Hold the trap with the front towards you firmly on a flat, solid surface.
3. Put one hand across the rested large loop of the strike bar at the front of the trap.
4. With the heel of your other hand push smaller locking end back to position as shown in green.
5. Reassemble and it should now set.



13. “Can I relocate my trap elsewhere on my property?”

Yes, just wait a few weeks (rats are often neophobic, wary of new things) and make sure it’s suitable!

Traps are best placed along fences, in bushes, edges of houses, or near compost bins, as long as it is not too exposed.

If the first spot doesn’t work, try moving it to a new one.

- Ensure the trap is secured down and doesn’t wobble and create a clear run to the entrance.
- Scrape the earth in front of the trap to increase rat interest.
- Fix it down and make sure it doesn’t wobble.
- Ensure the rat can see all the way through, don’t back the tunnel up against a wall or thick vegetation.



14. “Why do I have to record my catches?”

This data is vital—it helps us track progress, target efforts, intensify trap densities, and show funders the project’s impact, which allows us to continue helping the community trap for FREE across the Coast.

It also helps us support active trappers, offer additional support if catch rates are high, and see what lures are working best.

Please record your catches using this [online catch record form](#),  by scanning the QR code on your trap to get to [our website](#)  and pressing the ‘Record a Catch’ button as pictured below.

Scan the QR code on your trap with any smartphone camera to easily log catches on our website, or use the one below.

Need a new QR sticker?
Get in touch!



“15. ”I caught a non-target species in my rodent trap” (e.g. a bird, a hedgehog)

Please contact us if you catch anything out of the ordinary — we want to understand how this happened. We may need to replace your trap. This hasn’t occurred with the yellow Supervisor Max traps, but can occasionally happen with older snap traps. To reduce the risk:

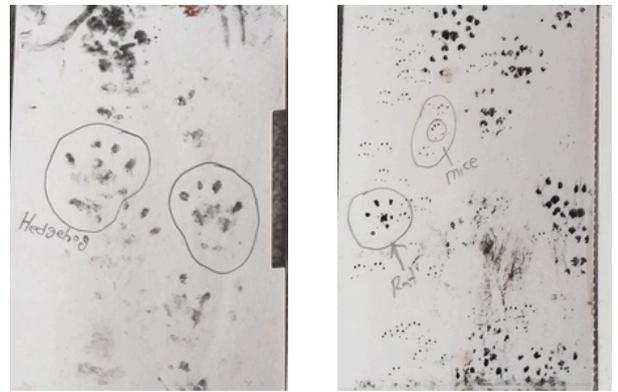
- Only fill the bait cup 2/3 full
- Place snap traps at the back of the wooden tunnel, if using.
- Reduce tunnel entrance size with a cable tie across the corner to make access more difficult for hedgehogs or young blackbirds. It should be approx 4 x 4 cm in size.
- Swap from peanut butter to egg or meat bases lures such as mayo or bacon fat.

If you see hedgehogs on your property contact us to borrow a humane tested DOC200 trap designed for hedgehogs, stoats and large Norway rats.

16. "How do I know it's working? Monitoring

If you are part of a neighbourhood group with a few properties trapping, we encourage you to loan some tracking tunnels or wax bite tags from us to lay out in your backyards! This can give an indication of the pest animal population in your area.

Our staff and volunteers do monitoring on parks and large private blocks, across the whole 3100ha project area, putting out hundreds of devices twice a year in April and August and the results are getting better and better!



Tracking cards with the footprints of hedgehogs, rats & mice.

Useful links:

Forest & Bird PFHC Web Page

www.forestandbird.org.nz/projects/pest-free-hibiscus-coast

Predator Free NZ Trust

www.predatorfreenz.org/

Auckland Council

www.tiakitamakimakaurau.nz/

Youtube Channel:

www.youtube.com/@pestfreehibiscuscoastproject/shorts

How to secure your Supervisor MAX rat trap (short)

How to set your Supervisor MAX rat trap (short)

How to unset your Supervisor Max rat trap (video)

Connect with us on social media:

PFHC Facebook Page

www.facebook.com/pestfreehibiscuscoast

PFHC Facebook Community Group

www.facebook.com/groups/pestfreehbc

PFHC Instagram

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