



Australian Government

Australian Quarantine  
and Inspection Service

# AQIS fact sheet

## Rodents on vessels

Rodents (rats and mice) have been responsible for enormous losses of food and transmitting diseases to humans causing suffering and loss of life.

Rodents commonly infest vessels as they are very competent climbers and have the ability to scale pipe work, walls, trees, and vines.

There are two main types of rats:

- *Rattus rattus*—the roof, ship or black rat
- *Rattus norvegicus*—the Norway rat, also known as the common, brown, sewer or water rat.

The roof rat is shorter and more slender than the Norway rat, which has a more robust build.

Rats also breed prolifically—over one year a female rat may produce five or six litters with up to 10 young in each litter.

### What is the risk to Australia?

Rodents can cause serious food losses and contaminate food in storage with their droppings and urine. The associated risks include the transmission of food poisoning organisms, such as Salmonella bacteria and a number of other serious diseases.

They may also cause physical damage to material, food containers, packaging, wires and cables.

### AQIS requirements—what you need to do

Article 39 of the *International Health Regulations (2005)* specifies that precautions must be taken to keep the vessel free of rodents.

It is the Master's responsibility to ensure that:

- all vessels are free of rodents
- all vessels greater than 25 metres have a valid Ship Sanitation Certificate. See the 'Ship Sanitation Certificate' fact sheet for more details.
- the Australian Quarantine and Inspection Service (AQIS) is notified immediately of any rodent sightings on board the vessel on **1800 020 504** (free call in Australia).

### More information

Internet: [www.aqis.gov.au/shipping](http://www.aqis.gov.au/shipping)

Phone: **1800 020 504** (free call in Australia)

Email: [seaports@aqis.gov.au](mailto:seaports@aqis.gov.au)