




Identifying rodent droppings

Rodent droppings can be very variable (depending on diet), including in colour, but as a guide:

Brown rat	Black rat	House mouse
-13-19mm long, -3-4mm thick -Rounded ends, one end may go to a point (as pictured) -Likely to contain fur -Often located in latrines along tracks, at feeding sites and on prominent rocks	-7-14mm long -3-4mm thick -Tapered ends -Often slightly curved -Likely to contain fur	-4-8mm long -2mm thick -Small and thin -A bit like grains of rice -Strong smell of ammonia.
		

Droppings of UK invasive rodents. Images: taken from Morton & Cole 2013

Rabbit or goat droppings be mistaken for rat droppings, though they are usually more spherical (particularly rabbit) and uniform. Goat droppings may be more cylindrical but with flatter or round, rather than tapered ends. Breaking up droppings should help (wear gloves): rabbit and goat droppings just contain vegetation, whereas rat droppings are likely to contain fur and a range of food stuffs.

Shrew droppings - typically 2-4mm long and 1-2mm thick, these should be smaller than rat or mouse droppings. However, evidence from St Agnes and Gugh (Isles of Scilly) shows shrew droppings can be much larger than this. They are of a sandy consistency and are largely comprised of insect remains, whereas rodent droppings generally contain a wider array of food sources. Rat droppings usually contain fur as they are extensive groomers.

Vole droppings are fairly uniform, cylindrical and tend to be rounded at both ends. Water vole droppings are 7-10mm long and 3-4mm wide and are those which are most likely to be confused with brown rat droppings. Rat droppings are usually tapered at one end (and are likely to contain fur/wider range of food sources). Droppings from smaller species of voles cannot be distinguished, but their uniform nature may help distinguish them from mouse droppings.

Invertebrate droppings

Wood mouse and yellow-necked mouse droppings look short and thick compared to house mouse droppings.

Invertebrates, e.g. rose chafer beetles may produce piles of frass that could be mistaken for a rat latrine (right). However, their droppings are likely to be more prolific and uniform.



DNA testing can be done to confirm species. Droppings should be photographed *in situ* and then *all* of them should be collected, not just a sample. See the resource section 'Rodents - trapping and using bait legally' and the document called 'Necropsy, measuring and sexing rodents', for more details.