

Backyard trapping guidance

What might I catch in my garden?

Rats and mice regularly visit most small gardens, and you'll most likely catch these. Large gardens and those neighbouring wild bush, may also get visits from mustelids, such as weasels, stoats, and ferrets. Let us know your environment, and we will provide the appropriate types of traps.



Are the traps safe?

For backyard trapping, we use T-Rex traps, with lockable boxes, or Victor traps in tunnels. Both are safe for adults, children and pets. Please follow these instructions when setting traps:

- Ensure your hands and fingers are well out of the way as traps have a powerful snap.
- Always follow good health and safety practices.
- **Don't let children set the traps.** For young trappers, we have extra-long Victor traps.

What bait do I use?

Most people swear by peanut butter, but researchers at Victoria University found stock-standard peanut butter might not always be the best bait. They found wild rats prefer cheese, milk chocolate, Nutella and walnuts to your standard peanut butter.



If you have cereal, meat scraps, and leftover vegetables, then use these. Experiment with new things, follow seasonal food availability, and keep changing the bait. Offer some *free* bait in and around the tunnel to lure predators inside and attract more rodents. They may return to their nest with the first haul and bring their family back. Rats, mice, and mustelids are clever and can associate bait with danger and become trap-shy. If you're not catching anything, try not setting the trap and leave *free* food in the trap. Pests begin to feel safe, and gain confidence to enter the trap. Once food starts disappearing, set the trap to catch them.

Snells Shoreline Conservation Community traps should not be used with poisonous bait. Pests poisoned in traps die elsewhere and potentially harm non-targeted animals and wildlife.

Where to put your trap?

Think like a rat! Choose a location that a predator is likely to go to – where they feel safe to stop. Normally, rats and mice avoid open spaces and tend to run close to walls, plants and fences. These are good places to put your trap.

If you don't have a wall or fence to put your trap beside, or you're not catching much, think about where in your garden predators might be hanging out.

Rodents are attracted to food and water, such as:

- Compost heaps
- Trees that drop fruit
- Native plants with berries, e.g., coprosma, porokaiwhiri (pigeonwood)
- Beside ponds, streams, drains and creeks



Ensure the trap box is on firm, solid ground so it doesn't move or rock when a rat enters the box, which can spook them.

How often to check your trap?

When you start, try checking your trap daily or at least on alternate days to determine the activity in your backyard. It can take time for the predator to confidently enter the tunnel. Keep the bait fresh, change what you use and get a weekly checking routine, such as every rubbish collection day. If you don't get any results after two to three weeks, try another place. Clean your trap every month or so.

What to do with the dead rats and mice?

This is up to you, but we recommend you bury them in the garden or wrap them and dispose of them with your rubbish.

What equipment do I need?

Always wear gloves when handling your catches, such as, garden or cleaning gloves. Wash your hands thoroughly afterwards. Keep all bait safely away from human food and children. Have a scoop, knife, or scraper tool to put bait onto the trap and around the trap location.

What should I do if I find a rat or mouse in the trap is still alive?

Very occasionally a predator is captured but not killed in the trap. We all have a responsibility to treat all animals humanely and you will need to quickly kill it. Talk to us about this.

Where can I get advice and help?

Snells Shoreline Conservation Community provide help and advice. If you have any problems with your trap or have questions, please email Alan at snellsshoreline-pestfree@gmail.com.

Useful YouTube links

[The Victor Professional rat trap - Predator Free NZ Trust](#)
[Setting a T-Rex rat trap - YouTube](#)

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