

# BIRDFEEDERS & RATS



## WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

The roof rat (*Rattus rattus*) is a major problem species of rodent in Orange County. Roof rats are frequently seen traveling through neighborhoods along fence tops and telephone lines in search of the perfect food source. Rats may feed on many different types of food sources commonly found in residential backyards; fruits, nuts, ivy, and dog food, just to name a few. Over the years, the Orange County Vector Control District has found that rats are also attracted to grain food sources, such as chicken and rabbit feeds, grass seeds, stored rice, and pasta. Included in these grain sources is **birdseed**.

Birdfeeders are very popular in Orange County and provide many hours of enjoyment for people who love to watch birds.

**However, citizens who feed birds need to expect increased rat numbers around their homes. This is because birds spill birdseed out of feeders onto the ground, and it is impossible to remove all of it. Rats will be attracted and return often in search of the birdseed.**

To reduce the number of service calls for rats in your neighborhood, the Orange County Vector Control District has provided this information and these suggestions for residents who enjoy feeding birds:

- 1. Birdfeeder Placement:** Place feeders out and away from any branches, fences, or other objects that rats may use to gain access to feeders.  
  
Hang feeders over an open space that allows any seed spillage to be picked up by ground feeding birds.
- 2. Loading Suggestions:** Do not overfill the birdfeeder with seed. Fill it with the minimum amount of feed that the birds might completely consume.  
  
Do not leave any birdseed in feeders overnight. That is when rats are most active.
- 3. Storage of Birdseed:** Always store bulk birdseed (and other pet foods) in a metal container to eliminate rodent access. Rats can readily chew through plastic style containers.

**Important: At residences where rat bait is placed by an Orange County Vector Control District technician, the birdseed must be removed to eliminate food competition.**

