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Rat trapping advice from Predator Free Chathams

• Last Updated 23 Feb 2024

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Predator Free Chathams is a community-driven project to help restore our islands' natural gifts and gives islanders a chance to be involved in developing and delivering a project for their island to be enjoyed by future generations.

Hamish Chisholm gives us his latest update.

Despite growth around the place barely slowing down, it is beginning to feel like winter may be just around the corner. This amount of growth usually leads to a massive surge in pest numbers, particularly rodents, as they take advantage of a surplus of food and ideal breeding conditions to maximise their breeding potential.

This season is no exception, with the most common reflection that I take away from every conversation with you all being the huge number of rats around. To put the problem in perspective, under ideal breeding conditions, one pair of rats can turn into half a billion in just three years' time.

A female rat typically births six litters a year consisting of up to 12 rat pups, although 5—10 pups is more common. Rats reach sexual maturity after 4—5 weeks, meaning that a population can swell from two rats to around 1,250 in one year, with the potential to grow exponentially from there.

That is scary food for thought. But even scarier is what happens when all of this growth stops and the food runs out. If you would rather not find out then we still have rat traps, boxes, and rat bait available for free for anyone who wants them. Please contact me if you wish to get some.

We are putting the final touches on a rat trapping competition so keep an eye out in the normal places for details on this and get involved, make a difference, and be in to win cool prizes and categories.

The annual [PF2050 Ltd\(external link\)](#) Projects Hui was held in Dunedin this year and was well represented from the various projects across the country. It was a good opportunity to further develop relationships with other projects and to provide an update on where our project is at. The opportunity to visit some South Island projects facing similar issues to ours was taken up and this learning is invaluable as we map out the best way forward.

We are waiting with our fingers crossed for the results from multiple funding applications that have been prepared and submitted. However, not wanting to count our chickens before they have hatched (particularly in this climate), new funding opportunities are always being explored.

While we wait, we are also developing several key documents to try and help boost funder confidence in the project. We are always more than happy to provide help with any private conservation funding applications. That could be in the form of letters of support, helping with writing the application, or simply advice to help clarify any questions. If this is you then please get in touch if you'd like help turning your project from a dream into reality.

Lastly, I would like to say a big thank you to all of those who took up the opportunity for free cat desexing during the recent vet visit. A total of 32 cats were operated on, which is a massive effort! A big thank you to [Environment Canterbury\(external link\)](#) and [DOC\(external link\)](#) for helping us fund this service. From the perspective of the [Chatham Restoration Trust\(external link\)](#) this is a service that will continue to be offered, so don't fear if you missed the last visit!

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