

# Feeding Wild Birds and Vermin

## What You Need to Know

### Take Responsibility - Be a Good Neighbour!

When feeding wild birds please do so with care and show consideration towards your neighbours.

You should always feed birds in such a way that does not create nuisance or vermin problems in your neighbourhood. If feeding wild birds then only feed small amounts using a proper bird feeder and remove any uneaten food before dusk.

In South Ayrshire it is the responsibility of property owners to prevent conditions on their property that provide a home or food source for rats and mice.

In addition to attracting rats and mice, overfeeding birds can also attract nuisance birds such as pigeons, crows, seagulls, and starlings. These birds are scavengers and frequently return to places where there is a reliable food source.

Nuisances created by birds include:

- Accumulation of Faeces. -Bird faeces is acidic and can damage property and vehicles. Build- up of bird faeces is smelly, slippery and unappealing to look at. Bird faeces can also carry disease.
- Some birds are bad neighbours - they can spread rubbish and their faeces can cover lawns, roofs, cars. Large flocks of birds create noise nuisances. Some birds can become aggressive especially if they have a fledgling nearby.
- A perceived overall lower quality of life. Homes and neighbourhoods become less-enjoyable when there are large populations of nuisance birds.



Rats are frequently seen traveling through neighbourhoods along fence tops and telephone lines in search of food. There are many different food sources commonly found in residential backyards, including improperly stored garbage, tree fruits, pet food, food waste in compost bins, grass seed, chicken feed and bird seed.

Bird feeders are very popular in South Ayrshire and provide many hours of enjoyment for people who love to watch birds. However, if you feed birds expect to see increased rat numbers around your home. Bird seed easily spills out of feeders onto the ground, and it is impossible to remove all of it.

Rats are good climbers and frequently access bird feeders hanging in trees. Rats are attracted to bird seed and will return often for this favourite food.

## **Tips To Deter Rats And Mice From Your Bird Feeder**

### **Bird feeder placement**

- Place feeders four feet off of the ground and 8 feet out and away from any branches, fences, or other objects that rats may use to jump on to feeders.
- Use a “squirrel proof” feeder with a tray and a baffle that will prevent seed from spilling on the ground.

### **Seed selection and filling feeders**

- Do not overfill the bird feeder with seed. Fill it with the minimum amount of seed that the birds might completely consume in a day.
- Do not leave any bird seed in feeders overnight. That is when rats are most active.
- Use a seed blend for the types of birds you are feeding. Seed blends that contain a lot of filler seeds and grains (millet, milo or sorghum) tend to end up on the ground where it attracts rats.

### **Storing bird seed**

Rats easily chew through plastic containers. Always store bulk birdseed (and other pet foods) in a metal container to eliminate rodent access.

### **IMPORTANT!**

If you have an active rat infestation, you must remove bird seed for trapping and poisoning efforts to be successful.

**For further Information** please contact South Ayrshire Council Environmental Health on Ayr (01292) 618222 or email: [environmental.health@south-ayrshire.gov.uk](mailto:environmental.health@south-ayrshire.gov.uk)