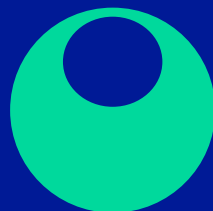




GUIDE TO PEST INFESTATIONS IN RENTED PROPERTIES.

NRLA
NATIONAL RESIDENTIAL
LANDLORDS ASSOCIATION



**TENANCY
DEPOSIT
SCHEME**

As a landlord or letting agent, you may encounter pest infestations in your rental property at some point.

Pests can be a major headache to deal with, confusing to determine **who's responsible**, and cause **significant damage** to your property and even your **reputation**. Therefore, it's important to understand how to address pest infestations quickly to avoid property damage, tenant complaints, and potential deposit disputes.

This guide answers common questions about pest control, offers practical tips, and guidance to help you get rid of those **unwelcome visitors**.



TYPES OF PESTS

Feedback from letting agents and landlords at the Tenancy Deposit Schemes suggests the most common pest issues are:

RATS



MICE



WASPS



FLEAS



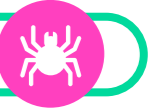
BED BUGS



COCKROACHES



INSECTS





Finding out about pest infestation problems

Findings from a [survey](#) funded by the TDS Charitable Foundation, shows that the large majority of tenants are reporting problems with their tenancy to their landlord or letting agent (87%). Conversations we've had with our members suggest that when it comes to handling pests, both landlords and tenants have been involved in handling the problem.



HOWEVER, IT'S NOT ALWAYS STRAIGHTFORWARD TO WORK OUT WHO'S RESPONSIBLE.

It can be difficult to determine who caused the pest problems, and of course, there will be cases where pest infestations are neither the landlord's fault nor the tenants.

As a landlord, you may be responsible when:

- 1** YOUR TENANCY AGREEMENT STIPULATES THAT YOU ARE RESPONSIBLE FOR DEALING WITH INFESTATIONS, OR THAT YOU WILL MAINTAIN THE RENTAL PROPERTY IN A "GOOD AND HABITABLE STATE".
- 2** IF AN INFESTATION OCCURS DUE TO FAILURE OF MAKING NECESSARY REPAIRS OR MAINTENANCE TO THE PROPERTY, SUCH AS NOT FIXING HOLES IN THE WALLS.
- 3** YOU MAY ALSO BE RESPONSIBLE FOR ADDRESSING AN INFESTATION IF IT MAKES THE RENTAL PROPERTY UNSAFE FOR YOUR TENANTS TO LIVE IN, SUCH AS CAUSING ILLNESSES.
- 4** IF THE PESTS WERE ALREADY PRESENT BEFORE THE TENANT MOVED IN, OR IT HAS BEEN AN ONGOING ISSUE AT THE PROPERTY, THEN IT'S LIKELY YOUR RESPONSIBILITY TO DEAL WITH THEM.



THE TENANT IS RESPONSIBLE FOR KEEPING THE HOME CLEAN AND TIDY.

This is sometimes referred to as 'acting in a tenant-like manner' within the tenancy agreement.

While the level of cleanliness maintained in a property is ultimately up to the tenant, lack of upkeep can inadvertently contribute to the occurrence of various pest infestations. For example, when a kitchen is left dirty, food waste and dirt can accumulate, providing an ideal environment for insects like cockroaches to thrive.

What you need to do if you're told about a pest infestation

IF YOU'VE CONFIRMED THE RESPONSIBILITY LIES WITH YOU, HERE ARE SOME KEY POINTS TO KEEP IN MIND:

- 1** THE FIRST STEP IS TO INVESTIGATE THE PROBLEM, AND IF REQUIRED, ARRANGE FOR AN INSPECTION BY A REPUTABLE PEST CONTROL COMPANY TO IDENTIFY THE TYPE AND EXTENT OF THE INFESTATION.
- 2** BASED ON THE FINDINGS OF THE INSPECTION, YOU SHOULD THEN TAKE APPROPRIATE MEASURES TO ERADICATE THE PESTS AND PREVENT THEM FROM RETURNING. THIS MAY INVOLVE TREATMENT WITH INSECTICIDES OR PESTICIDES, SEALING OFF ENTRY POINTS, OR ADVISING THE TENANTS ON IMPROVING HYGIENE STANDARDS IN THE PROPERTY.
- 3** IT IS IMPORTANT FOR LANDLORDS TO ACT PROMPTLY WHEN DEALING WITH PEST INFESTATIONS TO PROTECT THE HEALTH AND SAFETY OF THEIR TENANTS AND PREVENT THE POTENTIAL SPREAD OF PESTS TO NEIGHBOURING PROPERTIES.

DO YOU DOCUMENT THERE ARE NO PEST ISSUES AT THE BEGINNING OF THE TENANCY?

To protect yourself from deposit deductions at the end of the tenancy due to a pest problem caused by your tenants, it is advisable to maintain a **recorded inventory** from the beginning of the tenancy that verifies there was no evidence of pest-related issues. This inventory will provide you with proof if a pest issue arises later on.

DO YOU INCLUDE ANYTHING IN THE TENANCY AGREEMENT ABOUT PESTS OR VERMIN?

It's not uncommon for pest outbreaks to be absent from the tenancy agreement. **Often pests and vermin are not documented.**

An essential step to take when drafting new tenancy agreements is to ensure that there is clear guidance over who is responsible for what regarding infestations, leaving the tenants knowing **exactly where their responsibility lies**. This will make sure there is no confusion or disputes and maintain a good relationship between both parties.





Top causes of pest infestations

Although some infestations may occur due to factors beyond your control, such as the location of your property, there are also common causes that can be prevented.

Top 5 causes include:

- 1 DIRTY ENVIRONMENT
- 2 TENANTS RETURNED FROM HOLIDAY/BROUGHT INTO THE HOME BY THE TENANT
- 3 PETS IN PROPERTY
- 4 NEIGHBOURS HAD AN ISSUE AND THE PESTS/VERMIN MIGRATED
- 5 BUILDING WORKS

IS THE PROPERTY INSPECTED FOR INFESTATIONS DURING THE TENANCY?

Regular property inspections during tenancies are an effective way to prevent pest infestations. During inspections, you can identify any pest problems and take prompt action to address them before the situation worsens. Inspections can also **help detect any issues that tenants may not have reported**, such as small cracks or crevices that pests can use to enter the property.

If you do identify any potential pest breeding grounds during these inspections, such as garden rubbish or food waste, you can address these with their tenants directly and **help prevent pest infestations** from occurring.



WHAT TO LOOK FOR DURING PROPERTY INSPECTIONS

There are many kinds of pests to look out for, and while there are some obvious signs, there are other early warning signs to check for:

- ✓ DROPPINGS
- ✓ NESTS – CHECK THE ROOF, EAVES, DARK AREAS, CHIMNEYS AND SHEDS.
- ✓ EXCESS NESTING MATERIAL, SUCH AS SHREDDED PAPER OR ORGANIC MATERIAL SUCH AS LEAVES.
- ✓ CHEWED FURNITURE OR LOOSE ITEMS, INCLUDING WIRING, OR WOODEN MATERIALS.
- ✓ RUSTLING NOISES IN THE WALLS OR CEILINGS.
- ✓ HOLES IN WALLS AND FLOORING, PARTICULARLY IN DARKER, LESS-USED AREAS.
- ✓ CHECK INDOOR PLANTS FOR EVIDENCE OF GNAWING AND INSECT TRAILS.
- ✓ STRANGE SMELLS; AMMONIA ODOUR FOR VERMIN, BEDBUGS HAVE A SWEET, MUSTY SCENT, AND COCKROACHES HAVE AN OILY, SWEET SCENT.
- ✓ LOOK IN CUPBOARDS AND OTHER ENCLOSED OR HIDDEN, DARKER AREAS IN THE KITCHEN.
- ✓ IF YOU SPOT A LOT OF DEAD INSECTS OF THE SAME SPECIES – ESPECIALLY ON WINDOW LEDGES – IT'S LIKELY THAT THEY LIVE ON THE PROPERTY.
- ✓ RODENTS IN PARTICULAR CAN BE VERY NOISY. LISTEN FOR THE SOUNDS OF PATTERNING FEET, SCRATCHING, GNAWING AND SQUEAKING.

"My tenants have seen a rat and are very worried, what can I do to help?"



Rats are a **health and safety risk** so need to be dealt with promptly. As a landlord, there are several things you can do to help remove rats from your rental property.

The first step is to identify the **source of access**. This may involve hiring a pest control professional to inspect the property and develop a treatment plan. Rats are masters at gaining access and common entry points to check are poorly fitted pipes, broken air vents, drains, overgrown shrubbery leading to your roof, doors (particularly garages), exposed building works and new-build 'breathing holes' between bricks.

Eliminating the rat's food source is essential, **so ensure your tenants are storing food properly, and keeping the property clean and clutter-free.**

"What about pests that have migrated from neighbours' homes?"



This is a common problem, especially with mice and rats in terraced properties. You should **inform your neighbours and ask them to deal with the problem.** You can contact environmental health if your neighbours don't respond. Plus, the local authority's pest control or Environmental Health team can give you help and advice in dealing with problems with pests and vermin. **Some local authorities have a pest control service** which you might be able to use.

"My tenant has located a wasp nest, what course of action do I take?"



Once wasps have decided to make your home their own, it can be **hard to remove them.** Even if the issue is not considered a major problem at the time, a neglected wasp colony **can cause structural damage** so it's best to remove it as soon as possible. Taking action yourself is dangerous; wasps will sting if they feel their nest is threatened, and DIY methods aren't always reliable, so **getting an expert in to remove the wasps** would be the best course of action.

"What's the difference between a carpet moth and a clothes moth?"

The common clothes moth is **actually a single insect**, which sometimes causes confusion as it can infest both clothing and carpets. This pest is commonly found on **natural fabrics like wool and animal furs.**

"What is the best way to stop larder beetles?"



To avoid larder beetle infestations, **store food in sealed containers** and inspect for signs of infestation before bringing food inside. Keep your home clean and free of dead insects and other potential food sources for larder beetles. If you have an infestation of larder beetle, try to locate the source or the hot spot and **give it a thorough deep clean.**

"My tenant has noticed slugs are entering the property, how can I get rid of them?"



Slugs can enter through small holes or gaps and **come out at night** in search of food, so if your tenants have noticed slimy slug trails in the property, use a torch to highlight the path and **track back to its entry point.** For doors, block any gaps with a draught excluder. For larger gaps and cracks, try a more permanent solution, such as foam filler.

"How can I help with a silverfish infestation?"



Silverfish are creatures that **feed on mould spores**, which can thrive in damp environments. They are commonly found in **kitchens and bathrooms**, where humidity levels are high and ventilation is poor. If the infestation is due to a water leak, it is usually the landlord's responsibility to address the issue. This problem is particularly prevalent in HMOs, where multiple occupants share bathrooms and may keep windows shut and ventilation fans unused. **Drying clothes in a confined space** can also contribute to high humidity levels.



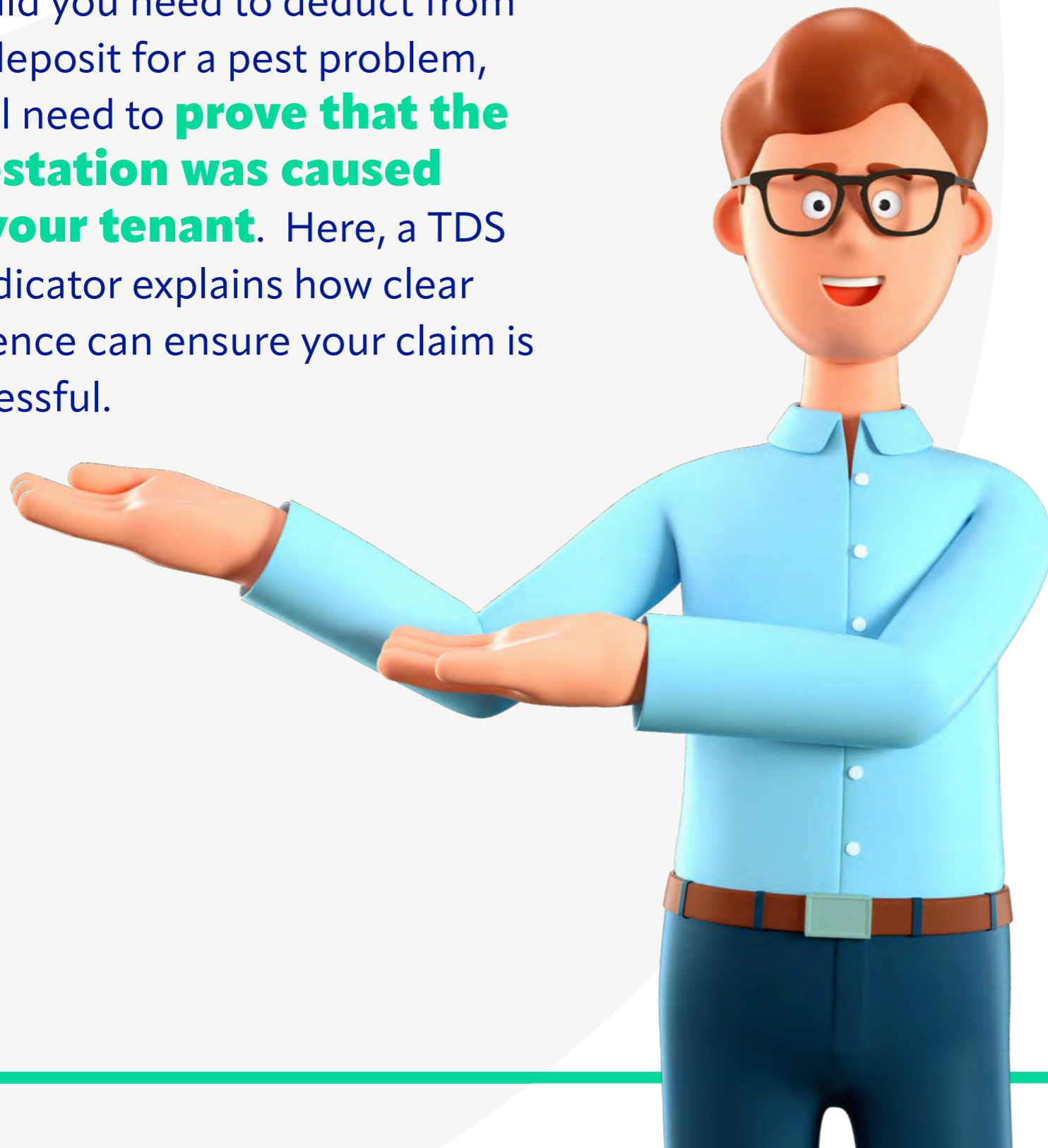
How to avoid potential pest infestations

To minimise the likelihood of a pest infestation in a property, **several common-sense practices** can be used:

- ✓ ADVISE YOUR TENANTS TO PERFORM REGULAR CLEANING AND MAINTAIN GOOD HOUSEKEEPING.
- ✓ CONDUCT FREQUENT PROPERTY INSPECTIONS AND PERFORM NECESSARY MAINTENANCE.
- ✓ ESTABLISH A ROBUST REPORTING SYSTEM FOR TENANTS TO REPORT FAULTS AND REPAIRS.
- ✓ IN AUTUMN, CHECK THE PROPERTY FOR RODENT ENTRY POINTS BOTH INSIDE AND OUTSIDE, AND SEAL ANY HOLES FOUND.
- ✓ HIRE PROFESSIONAL AND SKILLED CONTRACTORS FOR PROPERTY WORK.
- ✓ MAINTAIN THE GARDEN WELL, DON'T LET AREAS GET TOO OVERGROWN OR PILES OF LEAVES TO BE LEFT.
- ✓ ENSURE ANY COMMUNAL BIN AREAS ARE WELL MAINTAINED FOR FLATS AND HMOS.
- ✓ KEEP THE SURROUNDING AREAS CLEAN AND TIDY, AND MONITOR NEIGHBOURING PROPERTIES FOR ANY SIGNS OF PEST ACTIVITY.
- ✓ REGULARLY DEEP-CLEAN THE PROPERTY IN BETWEEN TENANCIES.
- ✓ DON'T FORGET TO DISINFECT SOFT-FURNISHINGS FOR BED BUGS AND FLEAS.

How to avoid pest infestation deposit disputes

Should you need to deduct from the deposit for a pest problem, you'll need to **prove that the infestation was caused by your tenant**. Here, a TDS adjudicator explains how clear evidence can ensure your claim is successful.



INVENTORY AND CHECK IN AND CHECK OUT REPORTS are key documents in enabling an adjudicator to compare the condition of the property at the beginning and end of the tenancy. Without this information, they cannot be sure that the pest issue occurred during the tenancy.



CLEAR COMMUNICATIONS detailing that the issue was reported and dealt with promptly will work in your favour. Your tenants should ensure that they report any problems to the agency or landlord. This may help to reduce potential treatment costs after the end of their tenancy agreement.



CONTRACTOR/EXPERT REPORTS can be very helpful in establishing the cause of any damage. The more specific they are, the more helpful they are likely to be in supporting or defending a claim.



PROVIDE CLEAR GUIDANCE on responsibilities for infestations within the tenancy agreement, which will help prevent any misunderstanding and verify responsibility.



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