

New York preps rat birth control test-run

April 17 2017



City officials say there is no scientifically accurate way to count the number of rats in New York, but SenesTech says four pairs of breeding adult rats and their progeny can produce up to 15 million rats in one year

The New York rat race is notorious—the commute and the endemic rodent population. But the city may soon have a new weapon in its arsenal: rat birth control.

Rodents are one of the least savory sights in America's largest city, spotted scurrying in and out of subway tracks or under the cover of

darkness, darting around trash bags dumped on the street for collection.

In 2015, the city invested nearly \$3 million on rat control after receiving a record 24,000-plus complaints amid alarm bells that the city was losing the rat war.

Officials are now preparing to launch a trial of a liquid bait which Arizona-based company SenesTech says makes [rats](#) infertile, but is otherwise non-toxic and does not damage the environment.

"We're going to be launching a trial at some point in the future," a city official told AFP. No date has yet been set for the trial and officials are currently "working out" the details, the official said.

"When selecting products, we look at the least toxic methods that will be effective in reducing the rat population," said the [city](#)'s health department.

New York's main weapon in the rat war has been the so-called rat reservoir program, which started as a pilot in 2015.

Dozens of "rat reservoirs"—concentrated areas of rats—are subject to months of intense baiting that typically sees an 80 to 90 percent drop in rat activity.

But how many are there? Legend has it that there as many rats as humans—8.4 million—but Columbia University statistician Jonathan Auerbach in 2014 debunked the myth, estimating the number of rats at two million.

City officials say there is no scientifically accurate way to count the rats of New York. SenesTech says four pairs of breeding adult rats and their progeny can produce up to 15 million rats in one year.

In 2015, a New York rat shot to internet stardom when filmed walking down the stairs of a subway station with a slice of pizza in its mouth. The viral YouTube hit has been viewed nearly 10 million times.

© 2017 AFP

Citation: New York preps rat birth control test-run (2017, April 17) retrieved 21 September 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2017-04-york-preps-rat-birth-test-run.html>

This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.