

Name:	David Reece
Place of residence:	Shrewsbury, Shropshire
Profession:	Farm pest controller
Highs:	Satisfaction from a job well done
Lows:	Illness

David Reece: “You have to think like a rat if you’re going to control rats”

Meet the ‘verminator’

text Rachael Porter

A rat-control ‘project’ on his father’s dairy farm, more than 20 years ago, marks the start of a rewarding career for farm pest controller David Reece. And he’s now the ‘rat man’ for more than 130 farms, within a 50-mile radius of his Shrewsbury based company Oakwood Farm Services, and seen by most, if not all, as a necessity rather than a luxury. Managing larger herds means that producers have little, if any, time to dedicate to an effective rodent control programme. “And dedicate is the key word here,” says David. “Dedication is just one key ingredient needed if you’re going to successfully control rats and mice. Half measures simply won’t work.” Strategic planning, time and perseverance are vital in all aspects of herd management. Rodent control is no exception, particularly for those wanting to meet rigorous farm assurance scheme standards. “Producers know I’ll handle the paperwork, as well as the rodents. It’s another box they can tick.”

David enjoys nothing more than the satisfaction of tackling a severe infestation. “It’s rewarding to see the methods I put in place working well. Even some of the worst rodent problems can be dealt with within eight weeks.

“But then baiting has to continue to keep on top of the problem.”

His philosophy is to ‘go in hard’. “Under baiting is a problem on many units. If you think you need 10 baiting points then, in my experience, you probably need 20. And it’s important to put the bait in the right places – just off the usual ‘rat run’ and in front of the food source to encourage them to take it.

“Using a top quality product – I use Pelgar’s range of baits – is also essential for the best results. Rats should die after between two or three feeds,” explains David.

Also key to controlling rats is to understand them. “Knowing your enemy is essential. You have to think like a rat if you’re going to control rats and protect your stock and your farm.”

Taking the zoonosis threat posed by rodents seriously is also important, as David found out to his cost early on in his career. “I’m not sure what I picked up, but I was very ill.”

But whatever his furry foe throw at him, David refuses to be beaten and has never failed to sort out an rodent problem.

“It’s all about persevering, being thorough and not resting on your laurels. And you have to continue baiting to stay in control and keep the rats out.”

