Oh, Rats!

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Mary Donaldson/KMXT

A workshop on applying integrated pest management to control rats on the Kodiak waterfront will be taking place this week. It is a part of an effort to minimize invasive rats in communities around the state. Mary Donaldson has more.

Invasive rats have been infesting Kodiak Island and regions of the Aleutian Islands since the first fishing vessels started arriving in late 18th century. Today the main species of rat on Kodiak Island is the Norway rats. Norway rats are a destructive pest that weighs about 11 ounces and is about 13 to 18 inches long, including a tail of 6 to 8 and a half inches long. Rats spread disease, contaminate food, damage vessels and their gear and more importantly, interfere with native wildlife populations. Since rats have caused extinction of seabirds on islands in Alaska already, a state-wide rodent management plan is underway to minimize the rat’s influence on wildlife populations.

Kodiak Harbormaster Marty Owen says that about three years ago, the rat population became quite large.

(Owen 1 :18s “…get rid of them completely.”)

Terry Johnson, an agent with the University of Alaska’s Sea Grant Marine Advisory Program out of Homer, says that the high volume of traffic in the port of Kodiak is a cause for concern with rats migrating elsewhere in the Aleutians, where there are several bird habitats that could be affected by the invasive rats.

(Terry 1 :27s “…high value, sea-bird islands.”)

Owen agrees.

(Owen 2 :19s “…critter like a rat.”)

Johnson says rat control is also crucial because of the diseases they carry and can spread.

(Terry 2 :24s “…and viral diseases.”)

Johnson is holding a rat prevention
workshop in Kodiak this Thursday for waterfront business owners. The workshop will provide useful information on how businesses can incorporate better pest management strategies and techniques. Increased attention to rat control has been due to recent Alaska
state regulations that makes it illegal, whether intentionally or unintentionally, to provide shelter or transportation to invasive rats. The rat prevention and control workshop will take place Thursday from noon to 2 p.m. at Fisherman’s Hall.

I’m Mary Donaldson.

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