

# Tenants legal help – vermin, who is responsible?



## Liability for dealing with vermin

Vermin infestation in your home can be very upsetting. I sometimes get emails from tenants afflicted with all kinds of infestation:-

- There's a rat in the house
- There's a wasps nest in the loft
- There are bed bugs
- Etc

Who bears the cost of sorting this out?

To a certain extent the answer is 'it depends'.

**If you have just moved in**, then it is for your landlord to sort out. It is your landlord's legal responsibility to ensure that the property (assuming it is furnished) is fit for human habitation at the time it is let. In fact if you move in and find the property is (for example) infested with rats and has bed bugs, you are probably justified in moving out (so long as you do it quickly – take advice first).

**If the infestation occurs after you have been there for a while**, then it depends on whose fault it is. For example

- If rats get in because there are holes in the external walls or
- Insects are attracted to damp because of a leak in the pipes

Then, provided the holey walls and leaky pipes were not caused by you, it will in most cases, be down to your landlord to carry out repairs and deal with the infestation.

However

- If there are flies and maggots because you never clean the property and it is filthy, or
- Rats are attracted because you leave food lying around and do not deal with rubbish properly

Then the infestation will probably have been caused by you. You will be therefore responsible for dealing with it.

### **What about infestation where no-one is 'at fault'?**

Well in that case it will depend on when the infestation occurs.

- If it is there at the time you move in (even if it is not discovered for a while), it will normally be the landlords responsibility to sort it out
- However if it happens after you have been living there for a while, then you will be responsible. After all it is your property now (until the tenancy ends).

For further information please contact Bournemouth pest control department on 01202 451199 or visit [www.bournemouth.gov.uk](http://www.bournemouth.gov.uk) for more information.

Alternatively please contact our property management team on 01202 548548 or email [propertymanagement@gomeridian.co.uk](mailto:propertymanagement@gomeridian.co.uk)