

Owls may help to manage rat infestation in Jo'burg

The City of Johannesburg plans to use barn owls to help curb rodent infestation in townships says the City's Member of Mayoral Committee for Health and Social Development, Councillor Nonceba Molwele says.



MVC for Health and Social Development, Nonceba Molwele says that natural predators such as barn owls will be used to help curb the spread of rats and mice in townships in Johannesburg. Image: [Jo'burg](#)

"We've developed an Integrated Rodent Management Programme (IPM) to eradicate the infestation of rodents in all corners of Johannesburg.

"This strategy focuses on the use of barn owls to help control the rodent population and is coupled with a determined effort to clean up the communities. The use of poisons will be kept to a minimum," she said.

Molwele was briefing the media about the City's plan to halt the spread of rats and mice in Johannesburg.

According to Molwele, rodents have remained a serious problem in Alexandra, Diepsloot, and Ivory Park, as well as in overcrowded buildings in the Johannesburg's inner-city buildings.

She said the plan is an ecologically based system in which all available methods are considered and then consolidated into a unified programme to manage pest populations.

According to Molwele, Jo'burg will spend R2.5m to eradicate mainly rats and mice in the current financial year.

Cleanliness and predators key to plan

"We need to improve cleanliness and general hygiene in local communities, which is part of sanitation and this includes correct management of household waste; elimination of littering; general cleanliness; elimination of waste water; repairing of broken water pipes and taps; drainage of excess water and correct storage of food," she said.

{[image]} Molwele emphasised that filling holes and cracks in homes, putting up metal strips on doors, and place mesh covers over drainage holes will help to reduce rodent infestation.

"We've also introduced owls into the communities and, as natural predators of rodents, they have an important role to play. To date, one owl box has been erected at Lord Kanyile where six barn owls have been reared and released into the communities to hunt rodents," she said.

Owl boxes have also been placed at Minerva High, Iphuteng, Cata Combined and Zenzeni Schools in Alexandra with four barn owls allocated per school.

The owl project will be extended to Marlboro Gardens Primary school in partnership with private company Eco-Solutions, and in time the owl projects will be extended to other schools in the area.

In March 2012, a rat cage programme was launched in Alexandra, where cages were issued to the community of Ward 76 as a pilot project to get the community there to play an active role in the eradication of the rodents.



African barn owl have been reared in various parts of Alexandra to try and cut down on the huge infestation of rats and mice in the township. Image: [Trek Nature](#)

To date, a total of 28,400 rats were caught since the inception of the pilot project and has since been expanded to all the seven regions of the township.

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