



Rats!

One day last week, we heard Mom say to Dad (the feed room is right by our pen), “Did you use the corn in this can that I set aside for Carlotta?” He said no.

By Martock

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Photo by Sue Weaver

Bubba the rat got caught in the trap. One day last week, we heard Mom say to Dad (the feed room is right by our pen), “Did you use the corn in this can that I set aside for Carlotta?” He said no.

The next day when she came to feed us after our exercise time in the yard, part of our grain was gone. Mom told Dad and he said he bet a squirrel was storing our food for a winter feast. Uzzi and I looked at each other and giggled. We knew better—we knew it was Bubba the rat!

Tonight, Mom was running late at milking time, so she raced out and threw open the feed room door. Bubba didn't hear her coming, so he was standing on the grain bin big as you please. Bubba ran. Mom slammed the door. Now there's a Havahart trap set for Bubba on the bin.

Bubba is a Norway rat, sometimes called a brown rat, barn rat or water rat. Here are some things you might not know about Bubba and his kin.

Courtesy National Park Service/Wikipedia Commons

Brown rat Norway rats aren't from Norway; they originated in Mongolia and northern China. They spread throughout the world on sailing ships and came to North America around 1750. They are gray or brown. Most are up to 10 inches long with 10 inches more of tail, and they rarely live more than a year. Norway rats can drop 50 feet without hurting themselves and swim up to ½ mile on the surface or under water, even against strong currents. They are nocturnal, have poor eyesight and are color blind, but they have strong senses of hearing, smell, touch and taste.

A single rat leaves 25,000 droppings a year (who do you suppose counted all those droppings?) and eats just about anything he can find. In 1964, a man named Martin Schein discovered that their favorite foods are scrambled eggs, macaroni and cheese, and cooked corn kernels. Their least favorites were raw beets (yuck!), peaches and raw celery.

Humans think rats are stupid, but that isn't so. Rats have their own social hierarchy so each rat has his place in the pack. They groom one another, cuddle when they sleep, and play games with other rats like jumping, chasing, tumbling and boxing.

Mom and Dad don't want rats to live in our feed room (me neither, 'cause they eat our grain), so when they catch Bubba, they'll release him near an old, dilapidated barn on a long-deserted farmstead where they have permission to relocate animal pests.

I'll post a message when Bubba gets in the trap!

UPDATE: Bubba got caught in the trap! Mom and Dad took him to his new home. Bye Bubba. Don't come back!

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