



January 25, 2018

Jamie Plenkovich  
Director of Maintenance and Facilities  
Ferndale School District  
PO Box 428  
Ferndale, WA 98248

Dear Jamie

Our school Health and Safety program is responsible for assuring compliance with the Washington State Board of Health rules for School Health and Safety (WAC 246-366). We review construction and remodeling plans, provide consultation services, and investigate complaints that pertain to public health.

Our office recently received a complaint that rats have been sighted in several locations on the Ferndale High School campus. Thank you for taking the time to walk the campus with me yesterday and to show me what you and your staff have done to respond to complaints about rodent activity. Based on that site visit we know:

- A rat was sighted and captured during fall 2017 in the vicinity of the Home Economics room.
  - No rodent activity has been reported in the cafeteria.
  - A rat was sighted and captured in the main school building last week.
  - Rodent activity has been reported and verified in the crawl space above the library.
  - Rodent activity has been reported and verified in the greenhouse and aquaculture buildings.
  - Rodent activity is more prominent in the aquaculture building, greenhouse, and around the outside of the "Old Main" building.
  - Rodent activity has been noted but is less common in other areas of the campus.
  - Some landscape plants were removed. Overgrown plants are noted in several other areas.
- Landscape plants provide excellent harborage in many areas, especially where the plants have grown up against exterior walls and where lower branches extend to the ground.

WAC Section 246-366-050 requires that:

***The premises and all buildings shall be free of insects and rodents of public health significance and conditions which attract, provide harborage and promote propagation of vermin.***

Rodent control typically requires a long term commitment and an integrated approach. An effective strategy requires work to:



- Eliminate rodents using traps or appropriate bait stations.
- Eliminate harborage outside of buildings wherever possible.
- Eliminate food sources.
- Seal areas where rodents may enter buildings, especially around doors, vents, crawl space access points, and areas where utilities penetrate from crawl spaces or a building exterior to the interior.

Ferndale School District has already initiated the following actions:

- Set traps and bait stations (one School District employee is a licensed pest control specialist) in areas where rodent activity has been confirmed.
- Remove some overgrown shrubbery.
- Assess building exteriors and repair damage in some areas.
- Obtain bids from pest control contractors.

We appreciate the work you have already completed. Based on our site visit, please initiate these additional steps:

1. Remove or trim overgrown landscape plants. Trim all plants at least 24 inches from exterior walls. Remove all branches within 24 inches of the ground. Thin remaining branches to minimize cover and eliminate areas where litter such as food wrappers can be trapped. This eliminates covered travel routes, hiding places, and nesting sites. It also makes the rodents more susceptible to natural predation.
2. Clean rodent feces from all areas and inspect these areas at least weekly to distinguish between current and past rodent presence. Focus baiting and trapping in areas with current activity.
3. Remove litter from around campus. Food wrappers usually contain food scraps that provide easy meals for rodents.
4. Remove trash from exterior receptacles daily. As an alternative, consider replacing existing exterior trash cans with rodent-proof models.
5. Assure that fish food and seeds in aquaculture and greenhouse areas are secured in rodent-proof containers.
6. Educate staff and students about rodent control and request their help with controlling food waste and litter around campus.
7. Continue to inspect and repair areas where rodents may enter buildings, especially around doors, crawl space entries, air vents, roof vents, and other utility penetrations.

This problem will likely take some time to resolve. We hope that this letter provides additional guidance to help you eliminate rodent harborage, food sources, and access to buildings. Please let us know if you would like additional assistance. We will contact you to check on progress later in the school year.

Sincerely,

Tom Kunesh, RS  
Environmental Health Program Supervisor