



SUBJECT: It's not "Wind in the Willows"

RECIPIENTS: All Council Services (including schools)

ISSUE DATE: March 2018 REF: HSB 99

A visit from "Ratty" costs firm £1.2M

A branch of major high street discount chain has been hit with financial penalties of almost £1.2m for health and safety offences and food hygiene offences at its rodent-infested store. They admitted five food safety offences and two breaches of the Health and Safety at Work Act and were fined £660,000 for the food safety offences, and £500,000 for one of the health and safety offences. It must also pay costs of £30,409 and a victim surcharge of £120.



Inspectors visited the store in February 2016 after a member of the public reported that she had seen evidence of a rodent infestation on the shop floor. The officers discovered an out-of-control infestation. The shop was dirty and littered with mouse droppings; food on display had been gnawed and rodent urine and faeces were found over packaging and products. Some products' gnawed packaging had been "repaired" with adhesive tape and returned to the shop shelves for sale. The court also heard that "the smell of rodents' urine was discernible upon immediate approach to the food section of the store." Officers consulted with the store management who agreed to immediately cease the sale of food.

On safety management, the goods lift was found to be out of commission, so that staff members had to manually carry goods up to the shop floor. No risk assessment had been carried out for this activity. Additionally, there was no hot water, inadequate heating and poor housekeeping, which resulted in stock being left in a haphazard and dangerous manner.

A cabinet member for communities, safety and justice, said: "I am pleased to see that by imposing such a substantial level of fines and costs, the courts take seriously the matter of food retailers' responsibility to ensure they adhere to legal requirements designed to protect the health and safety of their customers and staff. "The degree to which this company failed to uphold cleanliness and safety standards in its premier town-centre store beggars belief, and the financial penalty imposed is – to most people's minds, I'm sure – entirely justified."

Information on Pest Control can be found in [HSB90](#)

If you require further assistance or clarification on the subject please contact:

Corporate Health & Safety Advisers (see George section: Corporate > Information for Working > Risk Management > H&S Advisers)