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# Ratten!

## *Rats!*

### **Abstract**

Serial nocturnal attacks by brown rats (*Rattus norvegicus*), 3 days apart in March 2004, resulted in the deaths of 5 immature terrestrial chelonians (genera *Terrapene*, *Testudo*) housed outdoors. Another juvenile tortoise *T. marginata* recovered from serious injuries to the forelimbs as well as from a large perforation of the body cavity in the right axilla. Also attacked was a fully grown female *Terrapene ornata* which bore only superficial scratch marks at the bridge. This was the only wild-caught chelonian attacked, and with a carapace length of 125 mm, was slightly larger than any of the victims - all of which probably resisted the attacks, thus offering head and limbs to the voracious rats. Nonetheless this nearly unscathed box turtle expired 4 months later. The sole survivor was treated conservatively, without systemic antibiotic therapy nor gavage, and recovered fully within 4 months. The unpredictable hazard of rat attacks is discussed as well as means of providing security from such, via rodent-proof barriers. The danger is most keen for hibernating chelonians.

### **Key words**

Testudines: housing, rat attack, treatment of the injuries

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