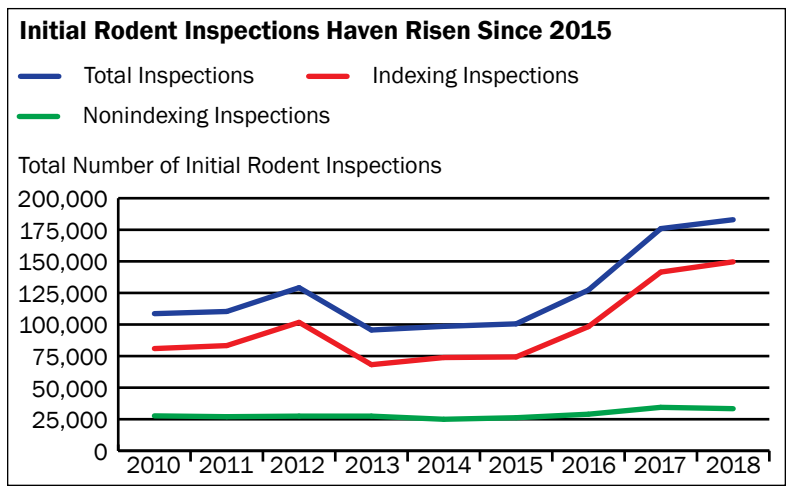


Are the Number of Health Department Initial Inspections for Rats on the Rise?

Rats have been a bane of New York City since the 1700s, spawning many different eradication efforts that have continued through the present time. Mayor Rudy Giuliani had a rodent extermination task force. Likewise, Mayor Michael Bloomberg, using somewhat less apocalyptic terminology, formed an abatement task force. Most recently, Mayor Bill de Blasio enhanced the city’s rat control efforts in 2015 and launched the [Neighborhood Rat Reduction Initiative](#) in 2017.

While a number of city agencies including the public housing authority, parks department, and sanitation department have key roles in rat control, the Department of Health and Mental Hygiene has a major part citywide, including identifying where rats live and breed. Have inspections for rats by the health department’s Bureau of Veterinary and Pest Control Services been increasing? We track changes in the number of initial inspections citywide and by borough.

- The number of initial rodent inspections by the health department, which includes inspections for mice as well as rats, has been growing, particularly since 2015. Inspections have risen 86 percent since then, reaching nearly 183,000 last year.
- Driving this increase has been an expansion of what are called rodent indexing inspections. These are proactive inspections looking for rats, or signs of rats, in multiple buildings or lots, or entire blocks. Since 2015, the number of initial indexing inspections has doubled to nearly 150,000, while initial nonindexing inspections, generated largely by complaints from the public, grew by a more modest 27 percent.
- The substantial growth in rodent indexing inspections is due to recent city initiatives that target “rat reservoirs”—areas that provide a prime rat ecosystem—and a reporting change that classifies any complaint made in these targeted areas an indexing inspection.



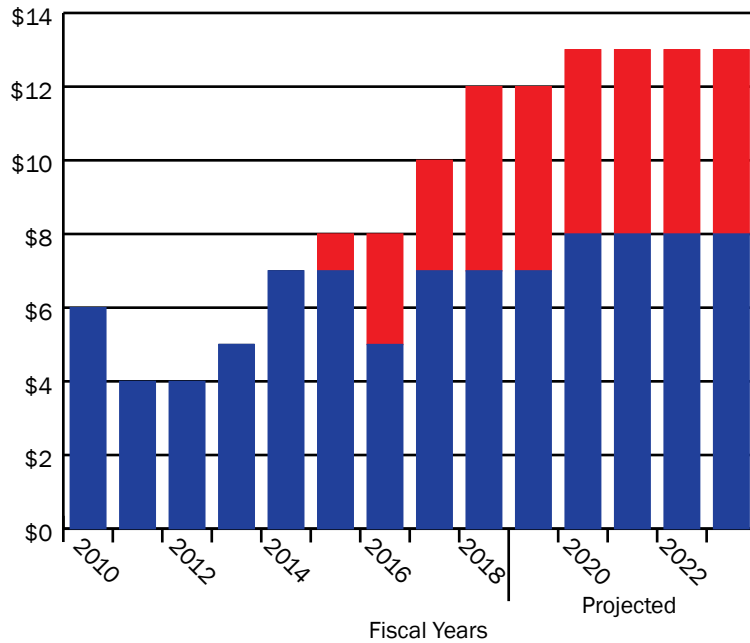
| Brooklyn and Manhattan See Biggest Increases in Initial Inspections, 2015 and 2018 | | | | |
|---|---|----------------|--|---------------|
| Borough | Number of Initial Rodent Inspections | | Share of Initial Rodent Inspections | |
| | 2015 | 2018 | 2015 | 2018 |
| Manhattan | 30,351 | 63,380 | 30.2% | 34.6% |
| Brooklyn | 14,929 | 64,361 | 14.9% | 35.2% |
| Bronx | 43,066 | 45,471 | 42.8% | 24.8% |
| Queens | 10,644 | 7,650 | 10.6% | 4.2% |
| Staten Island | 1,529 | 2,126 | 1.5% | 1.2% |
| TOTAL | 100,519 | 182,988 | 100.0% | 100.0% |

- In 2015, the Bronx had more initial rodent inspections than any of the city’s other boroughs. But with the expansion of rat indexing from the Bronx to other boroughs, Brooklyn had the most inspections in 2018. This shift was largely driven by the de Blasio Administration’s 2017 plan, which directed considerable inspection resources to high-infestation areas such as the Brooklyn neighborhoods of Bedford-Stuyvesant, Bushwick, Prospect Heights, and Crown Heights North.
- Only Queens, which had a comparatively low level of rat infestations in 2017, saw a drop in the number of inspections over the 2015-2018 period.

Budget Grows for Rodent Control Within The Bureau of Veterinary and Pest Control Services

- Baseline Budget for Rodent Control
- Rodent Control Funding Added Since 2015

Budget, dollars in millions



NOTE: Projected as of June 2019 Adopted Budget.

- With inspections and other efforts increasing, total funding for rodent control at the Bureau of Veterinary and Pest Control Services grew from \$7.4 million in fiscal year 2014, the year prior to the first of two de Blasio Administration rat initiatives, to \$12.2 million budgeted for this year—a 65 percent increase. The Mayor’s 2017 plan also included additional funding for rodent control by other agencies such as the sanitation and parks departments.

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