

# Trained Rats Help Remove Landmines

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Landmines are hidden bombs buried in the ground during wars. They explode when someone steps on them, even many years after the war is over. Even though landmines were used a long time ago, there are still millions of them buried in over 60 countries. In Cambodia, many were left behind after years of war, and they still hurt people today, especially children.



Because landmines are hard and dangerous to find, trained rats are now helping people remove them. These rats are smart, fast, and have a great sense of smell. They are also light enough to walk over landmines without setting them off. Their sensitive noses can sniff out the smell of the explosives, helping their human handlers find and safely remove the bombs.

One special rat in Cambodia has found 109 landmines. This rat is much bigger than a normal rat--about the size of a cat--but still light enough to safely search dangerous areas. His work has helped make the land safer for people to live, farm, and play on.

These rats are trained by a group that also teaches them to sniff out diseases in hospitals. They can search large areas much faster than people using metal detectors. Thanks to these amazing animals, more people are staying safe and old war zones are becoming safe places once again.

## Comprehension Questions:

1. Rats can walk over landmines without setting them off. What does "set them off" mean?
  - a) Detect them
  - b) Make them explode
  - c) Carry them to another place
  - d) Fix them
2. What is a reason why rats are good at finding landmines?
  - a) They are heavy and strong.
  - b) They can see the landmines easily.
  - c) They have a strong sense of smell.
  - d) They can explode the landmines themselves.
3. What is the main reason rats don't set off landmines?
  - a) They are light
  - b) They are lucky
  - c) They fly over them
  - d) They use metal tools

4. How do the rats help people in Cambodia?
- They fight in wars.
  - They plant new landmines.
  - They find hidden landmines so people can remove them safely.
  - They explode the landmines themselves.
5. What would happen if a heavy animal walked over a landmine?
- The landmine would disappear.
  - The landmine might explode.
  - The landmine would become harmless.
  - Dinner is ready.
6. Which of the following is false?
- Trained rats are used because they are heavy and can set off landmines.
  - Landmines can still explode many years after a war is over.
  - Rats have a strong sense of smell that helps them find explosives.
  - Some rats are trained to find diseases in hospitals.
7. What other job can trained rats do besides finding landmines?
- Drive little cars.
  - Fight in wars.
  - Build houses.
  - Detect diseases.
8. What is one reason why landmines are still around?
- They are easy to see and remove.
  - No one remembers where they were put
  - People are putting more in the ground
  - They are too big to remove
9. What is another good title for this article?
- "The Dangers of Rats in War"
  - "Landmines Make Soccer More Exciting for Children"
  - "How to Plant Landmines"
  - "Rat Heroes Save Lives in Cambodia"
10. What is the main idea of the article?
- Some rats are the same size as cats.
  - Landmines are a major problem in the world today.
  - Trained rats are helping remove landmines in old war zones.
  - Cambodia has many rodents of unusual size.

### **Speaking and Writing Activities:**

- Discuss these questions with a partner or a small group
  - Choose one topic and write a response to it. Show your writing to a classmate or teacher.
1. What are some other jobs that animals can do for humans?
  2. Would you travel to Cambodia? What are some places in Southeast Asia that you would like to visit?
  3. Have you ever seen or read a story where an animal saves a person? What happened in the story?