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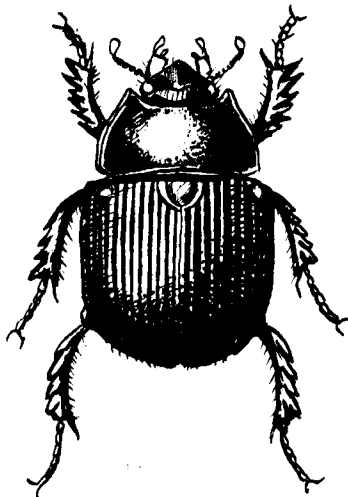
There were rats and mice in the houses of Viking York; the mice were the same as house mice today, but the rats were different. The rat found in modern York is the brown rat, which has only been in Britain for about 200 years. Rat bones from Viking York are of the black rat, which is still found in a few coastal towns in England and Wales, but not in York.

In Viking times there were also lots of frogs – their bones turn up in houses, rubbish pits, backyards and almost everywhere. Woodmice and the common shrew lived in the quieter and leafier corners of the city, and bones have also been found of the fox and stoat.

The birds that flew over Viking York were very different from the ones seen in the city today. Large amounts of rubbish in the streets and round the buildings attracted scavenging birds, just as seagulls will gather on a rubbish tip. Viking rubbish, however, was picked over by such birds as ravens, buzzards and red kites. We even have a few bones of the big white-tailed eagle, now a very rare bird. Apart from these big scavengers, there were more familiar birds such as pigeons, thrushes, jackdaws and sparrows.



Kites, ravens and rats scavenged amongst the refuse.



Fleas, houseflies and dung beetles were plentiful.

Viking filth and rubbish also attracted lots of big black ground beetles, house flies and bluebottles. Centipedes and millipedes were quite common too. The timber buildings had woodworm, and also provided a home for woodlice and spiders. Probably the most irritating small animal was the human flea – most people seem to have had a flea or two, and no doubt got used to it!