

How to Survive the Rat King Boss Fight in Last of Us 2

The Rat King boss fight in The Last of Us Part II is one of the most intense and memorable encounters in the game. It tests nearly everything you have learned up to that point: resource management, stealth under pressure, and quick decision making when the environment turns against you. I have played through this sequence several times, and each attempt taught me something new about the game's systems and my own habits. Below I will walk through what makes this fight so challenging and how you can approach it with confidence.

Understanding the Setting and Stakes

The encounter takes place deep inside the hospital, after Abby has been captured by the Rattlers. The arena is a large, multi-level operating theater with a central pit, raised walkways, and plenty of debris to hide behind. The Rat King itself is a horrific amalgamation of infected bodies fused together, shambling and crawling through the space. It is not just a single enemy. It spawns smaller infected, called stalkers, and can also release a cloud of spores that damages you over time. The fight is divided into phases, and each phase changes the layout and the enemy behavior.

One of the first things to understand is that the [Rat King boss fight](#) is as much about controlling the battlefield as it is about dealing damage. You cannot just stand still and shoot. The creature moves unpredictably, and its weak points are only exposed during certain attacks. If you try to brute force it, you will run out of ammo and health very quickly. Instead, you need to move constantly, use the environment to break line of sight, and prioritize the smaller infected that swarm you while you are focusing on the main boss.

Pre-Fight Preparation

Before the fight even begins, you have a small window to scavenge. The room before the boss arena contains some supplies, but more importantly, you can craft items using materials you have collected throughout the game. I recommend entering the fight with at least three health kits, a full load of explosive arrows for the crossbow, and several pipe bombs or smoke bombs. The crossbow is particularly useful here because it retrieves ammo from bodies, and you will need every shot you can get. Also, make sure your pistol is loaded and your shotgun has a few shells. The shotgun is excellent for clearing stalkers at close range.

If you have any upgrade points left, prioritize the dodge skill and the weapon sway reduction. The dodge skill lets you avoid the Rat King's sweeping attacks more reliably, and reduced sway

means you can land shots on the weak points faster. Stun bombs work well too, but they are expensive to craft. Save them for when the stalkers overwhelm you.

Phase One: Learning the Rhythm

The fight begins with the Rat King dropping from the ceiling. It will immediately start crawling toward you, dragging its massive body across the floor. During this phase, its weak points are the glowing tumors on its back and sides. You need to shoot these to damage it, but they are only exposed when the creature rears up to attack or when it charges. The charge is telegraphed by a loud roar and a brief pause. If you dodge to the side at the last second, the Rat King will slam into the wall and be stunned for a few seconds. That is your best window to land several shots.

Stalkers will start spawning about thirty seconds into the fight. They come from the vents and the upper walkways. Do not let them surround you. Use the central pillars and overturned tables to funnel them into kill zones. A single shotgun blast can take out two or three stalkers if they are grouped. The key is to stay mobile. If you stay in one spot for more than a few seconds, the Rat King will pin you down with its ranged attack and the stalkers will close in. Keep moving around the perimeter of the room, and always have an escape route in mind.

Phase Two: The Spores and the Darkness

After you deplete the first health bar, the Rat King will retreat into the pit and release a cloud of dark spores that fills the lower half of the room. This is where many players get into trouble. The spores deal damage over time and obscure your vision. You cannot stay in the spore cloud for more than a few seconds without taking heavy damage. The solution is to move to the upper walkways and catwalks. The spores do not reach those areas, and you can shoot down at the Rat King from relative safety.

However, the upper walkways are narrow and have limited cover. Stalkers can climb up there, and the Rat King can sometimes swipe at you from below. I found that the best strategy is to move between two or three spots on the upper level, shooting at the weak points when the Rat King exposes them, and dropping down to the lower level only when the spores dissipate for a moment. The spores come and go in waves, so watch for the visual cue of them receding. That is your signal to go back down and gather supplies from the dead stalkers.

During this phase, the Rat King will also start using a new attack where it vomits a stream of acid across the floor. This attack leaves a burning puddle that stays for a while. Do not stand in it. The acid puddles are easy to avoid if you are paying attention, but they can trap you in corners. Always keep the center of the room clear of puddles so you have space to dodge.

Phase Three: Desperation and the Final Push

The final phase begins when the Rat King has about a quarter of its health left. It becomes more aggressive, charging more frequently and spawning stalkers at a faster rate. The spores now cover most of the lower level permanently, so you have to stay on the upper walkways for the entire phase. The Rat King will also start climbing up after you, forcing you to jump across gaps to avoid its grasp.

This is where your pipe bombs and explosive arrows become critical. The Rat King's weak points are harder to hit now because it moves erratically. But if you can stun it with a bomb, you get a clear shot. I recommend throwing a pipe bomb at the ground near the Rat King, not directly at it. The blast radius is generous, and the stun lasts longer if the bomb hits the floor next to it. Then switch to the crossbow and land three or four shots into the tumors. Repeat this process until the creature collapses.

One mistake I made early on was hoarding my best weapons for the final phase, thinking I would need them. In reality, the crossbow and shotgun are enough for the entire fight if you use them efficiently. The flamethrower, if you have it, is effective against stalkers but risky because it draws the Rat King's attention. I found that a single well-timed smoke bomb can give you enough cover to heal or reload without being interrupted. Smoke bombs are underrated in this fight because they break enemy line of sight completely.

Common Pitfalls and How to Avoid Them

Many players struggle with the Rat King boss fight because they treat it like a traditional boss battle where you trade blows. That approach does not work here. The Rat King is designed to overwhelm you if you stand your ground. The game wants you to keep moving, to use the verticality of the arena, and to manage multiple threats at once. If you find yourself dying repeatedly, step back and ask whether you are staying in one spot too long or ignoring the stalkers.

Another common issue is running out of ammo. The game provides enough supplies to complete the fight, but you have to be willing to scavenge mid-battle. After you clear a wave of stalkers, take a few seconds to search their bodies for ammo and materials. The crossbow bolts can be retrieved from corpses, so always go back to collect them. If you are low on health, look for the health packs that sometimes spawn in the corners of the arena. They are not always there, but they appear at set intervals.

Finally, do not forget that you can dodge. The dodge button is your best friend during the charge attacks. The timing is forgiving, but you need to press it just before the Rat King makes

contact. If you dodge too early, it will track you and hit you anyway. Practice the timing during the first phase, and by the third phase it will feel natural.

Final Thoughts

The Rat King boss fight is a masterclass in survival horror design. It forces you to use every tool in your kit, from weapons and crafting to movement and environmental awareness. It is tough, but it is also fair. Every death teaches you something about the encounter's rhythm. Once you understand that the battle is a dance of distance and timing, it becomes one of the most satisfying experiences in the game. Take your time, stay calm, and remember that even a single misstep is recoverable if you keep your head.