



## Raptor Fact Sheet: **ELIMINATE RATS and MICE, NOT WILDLIFE!**

Rats and mice are not good house guests. They will eat practically anything, and their excreta contaminates what they leave behind. They can spread diseases and other pests (such as fleas) which can affect both humans and animals, and they cause tremendous damage to homes and property.

Commonly used anticoagulant rodenticides, however, can take a terrible toll on wildlife: birds of prey which take animals affected by these poisons can suffer from secondary poisoning, which causes internal haemorrhaging and a slow, painful death.

While it is sometimes necessary to use poisons in the interests of human health, there are other options which should be explored before we introduce toxins into our environment. Poisons should always be used as a last resort rather than a first line of defence. *Every* poison is dangerous. If it weren't a dangerous, toxic substance, it would not be called, "poison." By definition, **all poisons are harmful**.

Rats and mice move in because they are seeking food, shelter and breeding sites. By denying them these things, we can make the first and most important move towards getting rid of them.

Tidy up. Long grass, weeds, overgrown gardens, timber, sheet metal, cluttered sheds and junk piles provide the perfect environment for rats and mice to flourish. Animal food like bird seed or poultry feed should be stored in airtight, rodent-proof containers (ie: something that can't be chewed through) to make it unavailable to your unwelcome visitors.

Trapping should be undertaken with care. Traps should never be set where children, pets, wildlife or domestic animals can be injured by them. Set traps in a safe, covered spot. Two of the most effective baits to use are peanut butter or pumpkin seeds.

Although baits containing anticoagulants like Brodifacoum and Bromadiolone are readily available from your local council or supermarket and only require a single feed for a lethal dose, they take three to ten days to kill the animal by way of internal bleeding, and during this time, the affected rat or mouse may be taken by a bird of prey, a domestic cat or a dog. Depending on the number of animals preyed upon, the predator then becomes ill, begins to bleed internally from its liver, and unless urgent veterinary attention is provided, may die. Many of our magnificent native raptors and owls suffer this horrible fate every year.

If your pest problem is such that you must resort to using a poison — and we would never recommend that you simply tolerate rats and mice, to do so would be to risk your family's health — please consider selecting a poison which breaks down relatively quickly, with an active ingredient such as **Warfarin** or **Coumatetralyl**. While these first-generation compounds are still highly toxic and should always be used with the greatest care and as a last resort, the rate at which they break down means that they do not accumulate in the food chain as persistently as the second-generation rodenticides do. This means that they pose less of a risk to our native predators and pets who may prey upon affected rodents.

Whenever you use a poison, always follow the safety precautions on the label, most particularly with regard to accessibility of bait to children, domestic animals and wildlife. Remember: all poisons are dangerous chemicals. **There is no such thing as a "safe" poison.**

Whether you are using traps, baits or a combination of the two, good placement is essential to effective control of pests. Place traps and baits near nests, or places where the rats or mice take shelter. Rats and mice have a preference for running along skirting boards, under floors and in wall cavities. They tend to follow established pathways, and they like dark corners and hidey holes, so lay your traps or baits near these places for maximum effectiveness.

For traps and baits to be effective, the rats and mice must consider them a viable food source, so always tidy up and remove all other food sources first, otherwise the rats and mice may ignore your carefully planned snares and carry on eating your food instead! A good tidy-up may also drive pests away from your home anyway, removing the need to set traps and baits, so always try this before you do anything else.

Give rats and mice time to enter traps and take baits. Mice are curious, and are easily caught. Rats are cautious, wily animals and will take their time about getting used to something before they investigate, so be patient.

Good luck for a pest-free home.