

# RAT CONTROL & LOCAL WILDLIFE

## Nature Conservation Information Sheet



## Take care who you kill

Rat and mice poisons, known as rodenticides, are a convenient, effective way to control harmful rodents. However rodenticides can also harm and kill local wildlife and pets through direct and secondary poisoning.

Worldwide, wildlife and pets have been shown to be at risk from rodenticide poisoning.<sup>1</sup> Research by Edith Cowan University's Mike Lohr has now confirmed that Australian birds of prey such as owls and likely many other wildlife are similarly taking up harmful, often lethal doses of rodenticides.<sup>2</sup>

Anticoagulant rodenticides cause an animal to die by excessive bleeding. They are effective at killing rodents but other animals can also be attracted to the baits and, since the rodents take several days to die, native animals may eat dead and readily-captured dying rodents.

Anticoagulant rodenticides can be divided into two classes.

**First Generation Rodenticides** containing the active ingredients Warfarin (Ratsak Double Strength) and Coumatetralyl (e.g. in Racumin). First generation rodenticides work more slowly and break down more quickly.

**Owls and other wildlife are unlikely to die from secondary exposure to Ratsak Double Strength or Racumin.**

**Second Generation Rodenticides** containing the active ingredients Brodifacoum (most Ratsak brands), Bromadiolone (some Ratsak products) and Difenacoum (Talon, Mortein, Ratsak Fast Action, Pestoff Rodent Bait 20R, Klerat).

**These rodenticides should be avoided!**

<sup>1</sup> Riley *et al.*, 2007; Robertson, Leggoe, Dorling, Shaw, & Clark, 1992

<sup>2</sup> Lohr, MT, 2018

# How can I safely control rats and mice?

Organisations such as Birdlife Australia are tackling the rodenticide issue at a national level to have appropriate controls on the sale of second generation rodenticides.

At the local level, Nature Conservation has formed a Rodenticide Action Group. The objective is to limit use of the second generation rodenticides that are killing off our Boobooks, Masked Owls and likely many other nocturnal wildlife. The Group is mounting a campaign to get distributors on board to restrict sales and get the message out to customers – pest controllers, householders and agriculturalists.

Ideally, we should be using traps rather than baits to control rats and mice. A wide variety of traps, including electronic traps, is available. Careful positioning is necessary to be effective and reduce harm to non-target species. Old fashioned snap traps baited with peanut butter are also effective if placed along edges of walls and corners where rodents travel. A homemade rat poison can also be made using baking powder. Find the recipe here-[https://www.wikihow.com/Make-Rat-Poison#Flour.2C\\_Sugar\\_and\\_Baking\\_Soda\\_sub](https://www.wikihow.com/Make-Rat-Poison#Flour.2C_Sugar_and_Baking_Soda_sub).

If you must use baits, choose first generation rodenticides such as **Ratsak Double Strength** and **Racumin**.



If employing a licensed pesticide company, choose one that does not use second generation rodenticide products.

## There are other ways you can reduce the need for rat control:

- keep your garden or property clean and tidy
- clean up brush piles and rubbish
- secure compost heaps
- keep pet food indoors
- use chicken feeders which prevent spillage
- pick up fallen fruits from beneath your fruit trees
- seal holes and other potential entry points in buildings and enclosures.

## Other ways to help:

- Take sick and injured wildlife to your local vet or wildlife carer.
- Donate to the work of Nature Conservation's Rodenticide Action Group.
- Support wildlife rescue organisation such as FAWNA.

## References

Lohr, M.T., 2018. Anticoagulant rodenticide exposure in an Australian predatory bird increases with proximity to developed habitat. *Science of the Total Environment* 643:134–144.

Riley, S. P. D., Bromley, C., Poppenga, R. H., Uzal, F. a., Whited, L., & Sauvajot, R. M. (2007). Anticoagulant Exposure and Notoedric Mange in Bobcats and Mountain Lions in Urban Southern California. *Journal of Wildlife Management*, 71(6), 1874–1884. <http://doi.org/10.2193/2005-615>

Robertson, I., Leggoe, M., Dorling, P., Shaw, S., & Clark, W. (1992). A retrospective study of poisoning cases in dogs and cats: comparison between a rural and an urban practice. *Australian Veterinary Journal*, 69(8), 194–195.