
Section 29

Animal Pests and Their Control

Animal Pests



Animal pests include:

- ▶ birds
- ▶ rodents
- ▶ skunks
- ▶ regional pests such as ground hogs, bats, wolves, raccoons, deer.

Animals are pests when they:

- ▶ damage property, crops, feed, food or livestock
- ▶ carry diseases affecting man or animals.

Please assess carefully the benefits and the drawbacks of a control program for these pests. The amount of damage they do may not justify the cost and effort needed for a control program.

Legislation for the protection of wildlife may prevent the destruction of some pests or may require special permits for their control. Shooting, trapping and the use of pesticides may be limited to specific times of the year or specific locations. **Check with federal, provincial, and/or municipal authorities before using any measure to control an animal pest.**

Pest Behaviour

It is important to know about the animal's behaviour and biology to determine the most effective control methods, the best time to implement the control and the best location for the control (for example, traps or poisoned baits).

The selection of effective control methods will depend upon:

- ▶ the density of the pest population (how many are there?)
- ▶ mobility of the pest
- ▶ habitat of the pest
- ▶ preferred foods of the pest
- ▶ availability of food
- ▶ pest's wariness of man and foreign objects
- ▶ predators of the pest.

The best time to implement a control will depend upon:

- ▶ the amount of food available
- ▶ when migration takes place
- ▶ when population numbers are lowest (just before young are born). Controls should be set in place before this time.
- ▶ when the pests are actively moving about in search of food
- ▶ whether the pest hibernates.

The best locations to trap, shoot or poison an animal pest can depend upon finding:

- ▶ the den
- ▶ the burrow or nest and exits
- ▶ the regular travel routes
- ▶ the feeding areas.

Once you have gathered this information, you will be able to consider a Pest Management Program.

Animal Control

Animal pests may be controlled by:

- ▶ removing the pests from a feeding or breeding location
- ▶ destroying their habitat
- ▶ encouraging natural predators
- ▶ frightening away or repelling the pests
- ▶ shooting the pests
- ▶ trapping the pests
- ▶ preventing reproduction of the pests with chemical sterilants
- ▶ poisoning the pests with pesticides (including avicides and rodenticides).

The control measure you choose will depend on:

- ▶ the legal status of the control measures
- ▶ the cost of these controls
- ▶ their effectiveness.

Rodenticides

Rodenticides are pesticides which kill rodent pests such as mice and rats. Most rodenticides work by preventing blood-clotting. Most rodenticides are sold as bait. Rodents that eat treated bait die from internal bleeding after three or four days. Any animal that eats enough of the bait, from birds to the animals that prey on rodents (snakes, hawks, raccoons), will eventually bleed to death.

Follow the label directions carefully, and take care to prevent killing other animals. Construct rodent bait stations to prevent other animals from feeding on the bait. Keep bait stations inside, unless the label says the bait may be used outside. Never broadcast the bait near wildlife or domestic animals.

Aluminum Phosphide for Groundhog Control

Groundhogs or woodchucks are present throughout Ontario and may require control in some cases.

Phostoxin is a fumigant that contains aluminum phosphide and is sold in Ontario as a Schedule 5 pesticide to control groundhogs. Phostoxin releases a highly poisonous and flammable gas when moisture is present. Read the label completely and follow all safety precautions when you use Phostoxin.

When handling Phostoxin, wear a full face mask respirator with a gas canister and use cotton gloves. Never work alone. Have a second person wearing personal protective equipment assist you during the fumigation. Keep tablets away from moisture, open flames or heat.

Protect Yourself from Hantavirus



What is Hantavirus?

This virus is carried by rodents, especially deer mice. Hantavirus can cause a rare, but very serious lung disease in humans, called Hantavirus Pulmonary Syndrome (HPS). This virus was first found in people in 1993 in the southwest United States, when a number of people died. In Canada, cases of HPS have been reported in British Columbia, Alberta, and Saskatchewan.

Hantavirus has been identified in deer mice in Ontario. Deer mice are common in rural and semi-rural wooded areas. Deer mice are pale grey, with white fur on their stomachs.

How do People come in Contact with the Virus?

People are most often exposed to Hantavirus when they breathe in dust from the droppings or urine of infected deer mice. People can also be exposed if they are bitten by an infected mouse, or if they have broken skin which comes in contact with some infected material.

Are You at Risk?

Hantavirus Pulmonary Syndrome is very rare. But it's smart to protect yourself. Any activity that puts you in contact with rodents, their droppings, saliva or nests, increases your risk. Remember this when you work in areas such as barns, crawl spaces, grain storage areas and outbuildings.

General Precautions for Rodent Clean-Up

Ventilate the area for at least one-half hour before and after you clean.

Always use rubber or plastic gloves

- ▶ to handle dead rodents, nests and other contaminated materials.
- ▶ when you clean up surfaces contaminated with rodent droppings or urine.

Don't dry sweep or vacuum rodent droppings from floors or other surfaces,

- ▶ wet the area first with a disinfectant or bleach solution to minimize dust.
- ▶ wash floors and surfaces with water, detergent and disinfectant.

Use household disinfectant or diluted bleach solution

(1 tablespoon bleach per litre of water or 4 tablespoons bleach per gallon)

- ▶ to soak dead mice, used traps, nests and any other contaminated materials with disinfectant or bleach solution, before you handle them.
- ▶ to wash down contaminated surfaces with disinfectant or bleach solution.

Place dead rodents and all contaminated materials (including contaminated cleaning supplies) in plastic bags

- ▶ then seal the bags and burn, bury, or put them in a sealed garbage can.

After you complete the rodent clean-up

- ▶ Wash your gloves in disinfectant before you remove them.
- ▶ Change into clean clothing. Launder contaminated clothing with hot water and detergent.
- ▶ Wash your hands (including under fingernails) and face well with soap and water before you eat, drink or smoke.

**Special
Precautions in
Heavily Infested
Areas**

Wear HEPA filter breathing protection

- ▶ use a half-mask or powered air-purifying respirator with **HEPA** (High Efficiency Particulate Air) filters. Ordinary dust masks will NOT filter the virus.

Wear protective clothing and personal protective equipment

- ▶ wear goggles, rubber gloves, and long-sleeved shirt and long pants (or coveralls), and rubber boots.
- ▶ disinfect all clothing and personal protective equipment after you use it.

Contact your local Public Health Unit for more information about Hantavirus.

Review Questions



1. Rodenticides are pesticides which kill rodent pests such as mice and rats.

TRUE

FALSE

2. List 2 control methods (other than pesticides) which would allow you to control animal pests.

1.

2.

3. People are most often exposed to Hantavirus when they breathe in dust from the droppings of an infected:

- a) dog or cat
- b) raccoon
- c) deer mouse
- d) fox