

Rodent Poison is Dangerous to Wildlife and Pets

Many people don't realize that poisons used to kill rodents like mice and rats—called rodenticides—are highly toxic to wildlife, pets, sometimes even children, and the environment in general.

Pest control companies often pressure customers to use poison, sometimes in the form of bait boxes. They claim that these poisons do not harm wild predators—or your cat or dog if he or she eats a poisoned rodent. Pest control companies will tell you that the mice die inside a bait box and can't get out. But what if your dog, attracted by the scent since rodenticides are designed to mimic food, bites into the bait box? If you're lucky and get prompt veterinary attention, your dog might survive. We're sure everyone keeps a close eye on your children, but it's worth noting that as of 2013 there were approximately 15,000 calls a year to US poison control centers from parents whose children had eaten rodenticide.

And if you're concerned about our beloved wildlife, consider that slow-moving poisoned rodents in the process of dying a horrible death from internal bleeding or from neurotoxins causing respiratory distress are easy prey for hawks, owls, ravens, coyotes, bobcats, badgers, your dog inside a fenced yard and your cat in an outdoor patio, or even inside your house. Both primary and secondary poisoning are real and proven consequences impacting wildlife, pets, and the environment. Even “safer” approaches such as corn gluten cause prolonged pain and suffering to the victim. Why risk poisoning our indigenous predators who do such good job of natural rodent control? A coyote's principal diet consists of rodents, and a single coyote can consume well in excess of 1000 rodents in a year.

Bait boxes with glue traps also cause a horrifying death. Snakes, our helpful allies in rodent control, can follow a rodent into the trap and in their efforts to escape, “deglove,” actually crawling out of their own skin.

We have prepared a downloadable educational flyer on the dangers of rodenticides that you can give to neighbors, landlords, management companies, and others who want to learn about safe methods of rodent control. The flyer shows the faces of some animals recently killed by secondary rodent poisoning: a female coyote in the prime of life; a father great horned owl in Tucson, Arizona; a raven, perhaps one of the two recently found dead at our local stables; Vicolo, a beloved pet cat.

The best method of rodent-control is **exclusion** from your home, shed, garage, car, swamp cooler, and air conditioning condenser. Use ¼ inch or less metal mesh hardware cloth and grade 3 stainless steel wool (mice have been observed to use the finer grades as nest-building material), which you can combine with spray foam or a product like Liquid Nails. Many people have found spray repellents and plug-in ultrasonic repellents ineffective, and the audible beep of sonic devices seems to annoy the neighbors and not the rodents.

Alongside these exclusion efforts, attractants such as bird feeders, water, and nesting opportunities need to be carefully addressed.

You can **live trap** using metal boxes with clear tops to lure in multiple mice with bait of peanut butter, birdseed, or kibble. Traps must be checked every morning so the mice don't die of dehydration, and so that a snake doesn't follow them in and become trapped. Release mice at least 3 miles away so they don't follow a scent trail back.

If you must use lethal means, **electronic zapper traps** are the most humane and instant method. Many people empty the trap in an area where predators will find the mice, but only do this if you are **certain** that the mice did not ingest rodenticide. Until rodenticides are eliminated entirely from the community, there is a possibility that zapped rodents may have ingested poisons. For that reason, when the raptor center was more local they would not accept rodent donations from Eldorado.

The above information is supported by articles from Audubon magazine, the Center for Biological Diversity, and Safe Rodent Control Resource Center:

<https://www.audubon.org/magazine/january-february-2013/poisons-used-kill-rodents-have-safer>
https://www.biologicaldiversity.org/campaigns/pesticides_reduction/rodenticides/index.html
<http://saferodentcontrol.org/site/problems-with-rodenticides/>

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