

Evolving Strategies for Dealing with a Growing Rat Population

I. INTRODUCTION

- A. This document is intended as a beginning and we are definitely open to adding to it and refining it as we go along.

II. Basic Strategy:

- A. Hopefully, nature will work on restoring the balance outdoors. People have already reported a growth in the owl and hawk populations.
- B. What we need to be is alert to them going indoors, do our best to prevent their entry, and catch/trap/kill them if they do get inside.
- C. This strategy divides into two major parts:
 1. By the types of houses, and
 2. Methods of trapping and killing

III. Kinds of Houses

- A. Year Round Resident
 1. Seal whatever entry points you can find
 2. Insulate floors and seal them with Hardware Cloth (quarter inch holes is best). Young rats can get into any hole that a mouse can. Also, rats will take a smaller hole and enlarge it.
 3. Choose your method of trapping and killing (see below)
 4. Make sure your house is visited when you are away for more than a week
 5. Store foods that rats will eat (mostly anything) in secure containers of either hard plastic or, even better, metal, especially if you have animals and outbuildings.
 6. If you love your bird feeder, put in small amounts that the birds will eat in a day or else bring them in at night.
- B. Vacation Homes
 1. We don't want you to come for your first long weekend and have a really bad day
 2. You want someone checking your house for signs of rats and/or checking traps
 3. If you find signs, specifically rat droppings, then set several traps
 4. We will look into putting a note on Real Hornby and Facebook to let part timers know that we need their involvement and how to participate
 5. Call good friends in the city and ask if you can check their homes
 6. If you live in the city, call a neighbour you know well enough and ask him/her to check your house. It's in that person's interest as well as your own.

IV. Methods of Trapping and Killing

- A. Rats are tasters, so they'll try bait or poison a little bit at a time at first.
 1. If it makes them sick they won't come back. But if they eat a lot, they'll die. This can happen either in their hiding places or, if they get dopey, they'll die out somewhere and get eaten.
 - a) Warfarin is no longer being sold as a rat poison (when current supplies are used up). "Halk" is a newer one and seems to be less toxic to animals that eat rats.
 - b) Other issue with poison is that rats will crawl into dens that may be in your walls and die there.
- B. The poisons need to be monitored at least every other day to keep the supply up. If there's too little, a rat can eat it and then have a litter which is resistant.
 1. Remember that a rat's range is about 300' from its nest
 2. Like us, rats are omnivores

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- C. If your home is already infested (meaning you have more than one), then consider using poison, of which there are several variations
 - 1. the safest seems to be the one made of corn cellulose
 - 2. the coop is looking into getting a license to sell poison at which time it would also carry the traps that house the poison
 - 3. they are selling “Hawk” at South Country which is less likely to do secondary kills
- D. Cheap, do it yourself version of a poison trap:
 - 1. two lengths of 2” or 3” pvc with a T.
 - 2. Hang poison on a wire from the top of the T.
 - 3. The top needs a cap
 - 4. This trap was shown at the November HIRRA meeting and is available to view downstairs in the Coop
- E. Using bait:
 - 1. Live trap:
 - a) looks like a smaller version of the possum traps.
 - b) the coop will have them.
 - c) the rat enters the cage and steps on a plate that closes the door
 - d) They are safe because you can always liberate an animal that gets in.
 - e) Drown trapped rats.
 - F. Nooskies (rings): These slide a tight noose around the rat’s neck and it dies close to the trap. The coop may also decide to have these available.
 - G. The old fashioned Snap Trap, which is a large version of the familiar mouse version
 - H. Drowners: another do it yourself option
 - 1. take a plastic waste basket; dowel or rolling pin, a tin can; a ramp or some way to make it easy for them to get up to the bait
 - 2. cut two holes on opposite sides of the basket and insert the dowel or rolling pin.
 - 3. the bait must be on the underside of the dowel or pin, so a can slit lengthwise with the bait just inside it allows the rat to get on the dowel. When reaching for the food, the dowel turns and the rat falls into the water which fills just over half of the waste basket.
- V. If your home is not infested yet: Early warning system
 - A. Set a trap away from the house and in a place that you think rats might already be present (e.g. near a woodshed or barn). Any of the traps listed above would work, so long as it is checked.
 - B. When you catch one, you know that they are around

VI. Every trap, no matter which kind, must be checked on a regular basis

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