

# *Killing Rats*

**CIRCULAR 466**



**EXTENSION SERVICE**

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# KILLING RATS

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Killing rats is a community problem. They continually move from farm to farm, or from house to house in town. To insure against reinfestation, everyone in the neighborhood should poison at the same time. Temporary relief, can be had by killing the rats around a single home.

## WHAT TO USE

Poison baits are best around farms or town homes. Red squill and ANTU are the safest poisons, for home use.

Red squill is mildly toxic to domestic animals, but quite poisonous to rats.

ANTU is poisonous to nearly every animal. Therefore, use it with extreme caution. Do not spread ANTU dust in rat runs as a tracking poison. Although some rats will be killed by licking dust from their feet, this is costly and impractical. ANTU will remain poisonous for a long time after it is spread. But there is always danger of it getting on feed and killing livestock or pets.

Following are foods with which poison is mixed to make a bait rats will eat:

- ✓ One pound of freshly ground hamburger and one pound of oatmeal.
- ✓✓ One pound ground fish and one pound oatmeal.
- ✓✓✓ One pound of ground bread crumbs,  $\frac{1}{4}$  cup peanut butter and  $\frac{1}{4}$  cup molasses.
- ✓✓✓✓ Fruits or vegetables—cut into small pieces and slightly moisten with water. Then sprinkle the poison over the pieces.

Add poisons to foods at the following rates:

- ✓ **Red squill** — 1 pound for each 9 pounds of food.
- ✓✓ **ANTU** — 4 ounces for each  $12\frac{1}{2}$  pounds of food, or follow the directions on container. There are several different strengths of ANTU available.

Although the rat poison called 1080 is more effective than either Red squill or ANTU, it is too dangerous to use. This compound is several times as poisonous as strychnine and there is no antidote for it. All animals—including humans—are killed by very small doses. Consequently, sale of 1080 is restricted to professional persons trained in its use.

## **HOW TO USE RAT POISONS:**

For three consecutive nights, put out unpoisoned bait in or near rat runs, and around feeding places. Roll bait into balls, size of a marble. Put out late in the evening and collect all not eaten the next morning. **This pre-baiting is necessary since rats are very suspicious animals.** It usually takes about three nights for rats to become accustomed to strange food.

On the fourth night, use the same bait, but add the poison. Put it out in the same places. To be sure each rat will be able to have all it can eat, use 2 or 3 times as much as was used in pre-baiting. Leave the bait out for two nights **IF IT IS PUT IN PLACES WHERE CHILDREN, PETS, POULTRY, AND LIVESTOCK CANNOT GET TO IT.** Put out plenty of poison bait. It will take about 1 pound for an average farm; 2 or 3 pounds if there are an unusually large number of rats, or many buildings. After the second night, pick up all uneaten baits, and burn or bury deeply.

**USE CAUTION IN USING ALL POISONS AND POISON BAITS TO AVOID KILLING CHILDREN, PETS, OR LIVESTOCK.**

Both Red squill and ANTU are slow killers, and rats are usually able to get back to their burrows before dying. For this reason, many are killed but are never found.

## **RAT PROOFING**

Rat proofing is the only method of permanently avoiding rat damage. Rats must have both food and shelter to live, and if either of these are denied, they will either die or leave. Your County Agent can furnish you with a bulletin on rat proofing buildings.

## **CLEAN-UP**

Don't allow trash piles to accumulate. These make ideal hiding places for rats.

Keep favorite hiding places such as wood piles, stored lumber, etc., on platforms at least 12 inches above ground. If rats try to use this shelter, dogs and cats can go under after them.

Keep garbage in tightly closed cans, 12 inches or more off the ground. In towns, garbage is one of the main rat foods.

## **RULE FOR ESTIMATING RAT NUMBERS**

The following is a reliable rule for estimating rat numbers on a farm:

If rats are never seen, but places where they have been feeding are noticed occasionally, there are from 1 to 100 nearby.

If one is seen occasionally at night, there are from 100 to 500.

If rats are seen every night, there are from 500 to 1,000.

If they are seen regularly night and day, there are up to 2,000 on the farm.

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