

Conservation Committee - Tip of the Month

Rodenticide Poisoning of Wildlife



The very creatures that we rely upon to keep our rodent population under control are rapidly being poisoned by rodenticides.

Second generation anti-coagulants persist and accumulate in rodents and kill scavengers and predators that feed on rodents poisoned by them. In the last few years, more than 70% of wildlife tested in California have been exposed to these rodenticides, including more than 25 different species.

They have been illegal for California consumers to purchase since 2014 and most commercial pest-control services since 2021. But even the older generation anti-coagulants bioaccumulate, although to a lesser extent than the newer ones. This means that even these older anti-coagulant rat poisons can have devastating effects on creatures throughout the ecosystem.

The Town of Portola Valley has been using non-toxic methods, such as trapping, on all our sports fields, with good success for a number of years. In our experience we have found that the results and costs are roughly similar.

There are many safer alternatives to anti-coagulant rodenticides:

- Exclusion and sanitation are the best approach to managing rodents.
 - Sealing buildings, eliminating food and water sources,
 - Rotting fruits and vegetables from fruit trees, grape vines and home gardens are a significant source of food for rodents - dispose of or compost them
- Trimming foliage and tree limbs from the sides and roofs of houses
 - Reducing access of rodents.
- Safer rodent-control options
 - Providing owl boxes in rural areas to encourage natural predation.
 - <https://www.raptorsarethesolution.org>
 - More than 175 less-toxic rat poison products are still available for use.
 - SafeRodentControl.org.

Please make sure that you or your pest-control services are not using these types of poisons, and that any old bait boxes are removed from your property.

Just a few of the helpers that we are trying to protect.



Puma / Mountain Lion (*Puma concolor*)



Gray fox (*Urocyon cinereoargenteus*)



Bobcat (*Lynx rufus*)



Great Horned Owl (*Bubo virginianus*)
Photos courtesy of Catherine Magill



Gopher snake (*Pituophis catenifer*)