

# RODENTICIDE FREE ONTARIO



Rat poisons (“rodenticides”) and glue boards are inhumane, and pose serious threats to family pets, wildlife species, the environment, and human health. Furthermore, these methods fail to control rodent populations over the long-term. Comprehensive policy reform is required to protect Ontario’s natural ecosystems and reflect the federal and provincial governments’ obligation to treat the well-being of the environment as a primary consideration.

## HARMING NATIVE WILDLIFE

RODENTICIDES are chemical compounds designed to kill rodents and other mammals by preventing normal blood clotting, causing internal hemorrhaging, or disturbing nervous system functions. These products, enhanced with attractive flavours and colours, are commonly placed around structures to attract unwelcome wildlife, leading to death.

Many of Ontario's native and at-risk species face high risks of rodenticide poisoning. In addition to rats and mice, small animals including songbirds, shrews, voles, and other non-target mammals and invertebrates are known to access bait boxes containing these poisons. This direct feeding is contaminating the food-chain and wider ecosystem: coyotes, bobcats, foxes, skunks and other mammalian predators that feed on small animals have been found to have rodenticides in their systems. Owls and other raptors are at a particularly high risk of secondary poisoning because of their dependence on rodents as a food source. A recent study found detectable levels of one or more rodenticides in 62% of raptors tested between 2017-2019 in Ontario.

Animals that ingest rodenticides or poisoned prey experience great pain and suffering over a period of days or weeks, most often leading to death.

GLUE TRAPS are adhesive trays or boards designed to immobilize mice or small animals who walk across or land on its surface. Ensnared animals experience extreme pain, suffering and fear in the days that follow commonly ripping skin, and limbs in an effort to escape as starvation and dehydration slowly lead to death. There is no way to limit or restrict a glue trap to only target rodents, and as such, these devices also harm snakes, birds, lizards, bats, and even companion animals.

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## THREATENING HUMAN HEALTH AND PETS

**RODENTICIDES** are known to bioaccumulate and persist in the environment posing human health risks. In a recent (2022) publication, the Food Animal Residue Avoidance and Depletion Program (FARAD) warns of “substantial and severe adverse health risks to humans or animals consuming products from food animals exposed to rodenticides, especially in those individuals already on long-term anticoagulant therapy.” The American Association of Poison Control Centers receives approximately 10,000 reports of rodenticide exposures in children annually in the U.S. Health Canada has determined observations in the U.S. to be representative of the situation in Canada.

Since rodenticides are intended to be palatable for their target species, pets are also inclined to consume these toxic products. Dogs and cats may also hunt or catch poisoned rodents, putting them at risk of internal bleeding and death.

**GLUE TRAPS** may expose humans to hantavirus infections through touching or inhaling bodily fluids released when rodents are captured, according to Health Canada.

## ONTARIO MUST ELIMINATE OUTDATED, INEFFECTIVE PEST CONTROL METHODS THAT ARE COUNTERPRODUCTIVE AND MORE COSTLY IN THE LONG-TERM

Addressing the root cause of a rodent issue by preventative resource management and exclusion (rodent-proofing) is the best long term pest management strategy. That is, preventing access to food and shelter on the property thereby removing vector attractants, locating and closing off all entry points, and maintaining these measures.

Clearing a resident population simply makes space for new groups to move in. By distracting from the root of the problem (i.e., accessible food and shelter), relying on rodenticides and glue traps permits infestations to rebound. Furthermore, poisoned rodents mate faster to compensate for their thinning numbers. Rodenticides also reduce the efficacy of free, natural rodent control by poisoning raptors and other rodent predators. For instance, a single barn owl consumes an average of 1,000 rodents per year.

In the event that rodent intrusion does occur, humane and sustainable alternatives do exist. A transition to cruelty and chemical-free methods can be accomplished with relative ease, and have proven to be effective in Canadian jurisdictions.

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RISKS POSED BY THESE PRODUCTS ARE INCONSISTENT WITH ONTARIANS' VALUES, AND WITH THE GOVERNMENT'S OBLIGATIONS.

The existing risk mitigation measures are incapable of addressing the threats that rodenticides pose to the environment. Requiring rodenticides to be kept in tamper-resistant bait boxes does nothing to stop target and non-target animals from directly consuming these products and thereafter being ingested by predators. Rodents have been shown to feed on highly toxic indoor-restricted baits and move outdoors. Further, poisoned rodents have been found to spend more time outside of their dens during all hours of the day and die above ground. Since rodents will disperse away from buildings and into surrounding natural habitats, the secondary-exposure risk for predators is not acceptedly mitigated. The hazards of glue traps are similarly indiscriminate and impossible to mitigate.

## THE SOLUTION

The precautionary principle enunciated by the federal Pest Control Products Act provides that full scientific certainty is not required to amend or cancel the registration of a product where there are reasonable grounds to believe such action is required to alleviate a threat to the environment. It follows that rodenticides should cease to be registered. To the contrary, despite acknowledging that rodenticides are highly and acutely toxic compounds that pose serious threats to the health and safety of children and non-target species, the federal government continues to register these products, and Ontario has chosen to align its classification system with this inadequate framework making rodenticides immediately available for sale and use upon federal registration.

Fortunately, municipalities have the authority to further restrict the use and sale of dangerous pest control products within their jurisdiction, and have demonstrated leadership in perpetuating similar provincial reform in the past. It's time to update our approach to animal welfare and environmental protection for the well-being of current and future generations by (a) prohibiting the use and sale of rodenticides and glue traps; and (b) urging the Ministry of the Environment, Conservation and Parks (MECP) to ban all rodenticide products in Ontario without exception.



## CONTACT:

Hansenallisonm@gmail.com

905-718-7248



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## ORGANIZATIONAL SUPPORTERS



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