

RAT POISON IS WILDLIFE POISON: Use Safe Alternatives

Marco Island is a special place because of its warm climate, beautiful beaches, and wildlife. The island's special wildlife includes burrowing owls, bald eagles, hawks, shorebirds, sea turtles, and gopher tortoises. But did you know that rodenticide or rat poison that is used to keep rats away from commercial properties, condominiums, and homes is harming some of this special wildlife? Second generation anticoagulant rodenticide, in particular, is causing deaths in species other than rats. There are multiple types of rodenticide, but none are safe for other wildlife that eat rats.

Rodenticide is placed as bait inside black boxes around a property. Rats eat the bait and eventually become impaired or die. Predators such as burrowing owls, eagles, and hawks that eat rats often prey on these impaired or dead rats and ingest the rat poison. Between 2022 and 2024, 58 deceased burrowing owls in Collier County were examined. 54 of the 58 burrowing owls, or 93%, tested positive for rodenticide.

Effective alternatives to rodenticide do exist and are available locally or through your pest control provider. These alternatives include scent deterrents (e.g. cayenne pepper or peppermint), fertility control products, CO2 traps, and snap or zapper traps when contained.

In addition, rodent proofing your property and effective trash management are important steps in preventing or eliminating a rat problem. Rodent proofing your property means eliminating any points of entry for rodents. They can squeeze through surprisingly small openings. If you need help in this process, a local pest control company can assist you. Trash management is essential as rats are attracted to your property by food and water. Keep food, garbage, and garden debris in containers with closed tight-fitting lids.

Please help protect some of Marco Island's special wildlife by understanding what pest control products you use. If you have a pest control provider, ask them what products are being used on your property. If it is rodenticide of any type, ask them to switch you to one of the safer alternatives. You'll be helping to save our burrowing owls, eagles, and hawks!