

## Rat Control Rodenticide is Killing our Wildlife (Jim Scarpa, 3/30/24)

Those black boxes around your house to control rats contain a bait called Rodenticide, a fancy name for RAT POISON. It is an anti-coagulant that when ingested by a rat causes them to bleed internally and eventually die. The process is not immediate, depending upon the amount eaten by the rat it could take several days to die. During this time, the sick rat is easy prey for local wildlife, even pets. Unfortunately, Rodenticide's effects are not isolated to just rats, it has the same effect on all other animals that ingest it, directly and secondarily (If a poisoned rat is eaten, the prey becomes the victim of secondary poisoning). Over time, the concentration of Rodenticide builds up in the body of the prey and given sufficient concentration, the prey will become sick and die. Over the last few years, Burrowing Owls and other avian species have been dying mysteriously on Marco Island. Through the efforts of Audubon of Western Everglades (AWE), a process to quickly preserve the dead owls and birds was implemented so they could be tested by the FWC and UGA SCWDS. The results were conclusive that the cause of death of many of the animals tested was internal bleeding due to secondary Rodenticide poisoning. To date 30 deceased Burrowing Owls have been evaluated, 25 have tested positive for Rodenticide rat poisons in their system at varying levels. In addition, a deceased Barn Owl and a Cooper's Hawk were evaluated and both tested positive for Rodenticide rat poison in their system.

Rats lead a simple life...they search for **food** and **shelter**, if you do not provide either, they will go elsewhere. They also multiple quickly, if they are **sterile or dead** they cannot reproduce.

Unfortunately, Florida State law does not allow bans on the use of Rodenticide and other pest control products, so we will need to eliminate Rodenticide through community outreach / education and consumer driven demand.

### What can you do?

1. **STERILE or DEAD:** Eliminate the use of Rodenticide at your home: Ask your pest control company to use non-Rodenticide methods to control rats (Contracept rat contraceptive bait, snap traps, compressed air traps, natural rat deterrents). Do not believe claims of "safe" rat poison baits, this is false. If your pest control company does not offer an alternative, find one that does.
2. Make your property less attractive, and impervious, to rats:
  - a. **FOOD:** Keep trash cans inside until pickup. Do not dump food in construction dumpsters.
  - b. **SHELTER:** Keep trees trimmed away from the house so they do not provide a bridge for rats to use to gain access, make sure there are no openings in walls, roof, soffits, etc. for rats to use to access your home - they love to get in the attic.

### Learn more:

<https://cwhl.vet.cornell.edu/disease/rodenticide-toxicity>

<https://www.allaboutbirds.org/news/raptors-and-rat-poison/?fbclid=IwAR2P1PFZUiHMdKJfhm44YUEanFE-mMWgHqZgVUHnyM0tRhtkaehQzcvOy64>

<https://raptorsarethesolution.org/>

<https://saferodentcontrol.org/site/wildlife/>

[https://www.biologicaldiversity.org/campaigns/pesticides\\_reduction/rodenticides/index.html](https://www.biologicaldiversity.org/campaigns/pesticides_reduction/rodenticides/index.html)

Photos:



Photo: Family of Burrowing Owls near their nest.

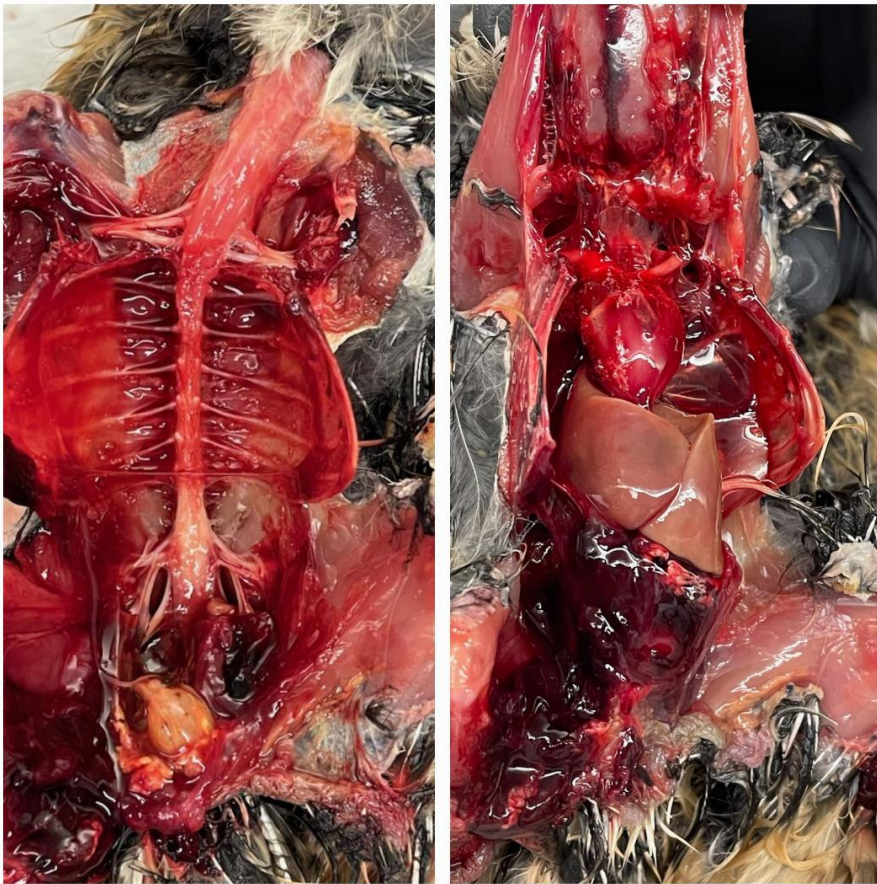


Photo: Autopsy photo of a dead Burrowing Owl found recently on Marco Island, note the massive internal bleeding resulting from secondary rodenticide poisoning.