

## Statement for City Council – Rodenticide Elimination

Good evening, Council Members,

~~The I recently attended the~~ Marco Island Beach and Coastal Advisory Committee ~~recently meeting, where we~~ reviewed the results of a year-long pilot study on non-lethal rodent control. The study, conducted by Wisdom Good Works, tested a fertility control method instead of traditional poison bait.

The results were eye-opening— over 12 months, the treated areas saw a **61% reduction in rodent population**, verified through hundreds of on-site data points. And this was achieved **without using toxic rodenticides** that harm owls, hawks, and other wildlife.

A little bit of background on the issue, those black boxes around your house and businesses 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 59 deceased Burrowing Owls have been evaluated, 54 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.

That the Marco Island Beach and Coastal Advisory Committee recommends that the City eliminate rodenticide use on all City properties and replace it with non-toxic exclusion and population control methods. This approach is humane, effective, and environmentally responsible. It protects wildlife and aligns with the values of our community. I ask the Council to support this transition and make Marco Island a leader in sustainable rodent management. (Linda Ryan suggestion)

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Meanwhile, the City currently maintains more than 90 poison feeding stations. These poisons are being found in the very wildlife we're supposed to protect—~~from owls to raccoons to bobcats~~. And now, ~~more~~ poison use has just been authorized ~~to continue for at least one more year on all city properties other than Mackle Park. At Mackle Park the decision was made to trial a chemical exclusion product around the building, but no form of population control - which we feel is inadequate.- This decision was made prior to the Good Bites pilot study report being completed and without seeking advice from our Committee which has been investigating this issue for well over 2 years.~~

Given these results, our Committee passed this motion on October 22, 2025:

*That the Marco Island Beach and Coastal Advisory Committee recommends that the City eliminate rodenticide use on all City properties and replace it with non-toxic exclusion and population control methods.*

~~While the committee believes the Good Bites product has been proven to be an effective and non-toxic form of population control, the committee is not advocating for the Good Bites product, we are advocating for the total elimination of rodenticide poison being used to control the rat population on city properties. We recommend an effective non-toxic form of exclusion and population control be implemented immediately on all city properties.~~ This approach is humane, effective, and environmentally responsible. It protects wildlife and aligns with the values of our community.

~~The city has stated that budget and resources are the constraints. As far as we are aware, the city has not evaluated options and costs to eliminate rodenticide at all city properties. It is our opinion that there should be minimal to no cost impact given that our current pest control company is having to re-fill the current rodenticide boxes on a regular basis, using an non-toxic alternative does not change this process. Additionally, city resources are not involved in pest control process, it is outsourced to Massey. In any case, we are happy to work with the city and Massey to develop a cost effective non-toxic solution, including providing volunteer resources if necessary. There is a rumor that this is a \$500k cost issue, we are not aware of the source of this information, but it is absolutely false.~~

~~We~~ask the Council to support this transition and make Marco Island a leader in sustainable rodent management.

Thank you.