

PRESS RELEASE ISSUED ON BEHALF OF THE CAMPAIGN FOR RESPONSIBLE RODENTICIDE USE (CRRU)

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Responsible rodent control training programme launched for land-based colleges, industry version to follow

A five-module training programme designed to give a thorough grounding in the responsible use of rodenticides to students on game, wildlife and countryside management courses has been launched by The Campaign for Responsible Rodenticide Use (CRRU) and Sparsholt College, Hampshire.

The programme is already in use at Sparsholt College and is being made available at no cost to all members of the Land Based Colleges National Consortium (LBCNC). Also under development is a version for agricultural degree and diploma courses and an industry version designed for working farmers, farm managers, gamekeepers and countryside managers. For the industry version, the developers will be working with BASIS PROMPT (Professional Register Of Managers and Pest Technicians) to get the course accredited with BASIS CPD points. All three versions will be self-contained on DVD and ready-to-use by lecturers and trainers, with no recourse necessary to any other sources of information.

The rationale for all three versions of the programme is the same as for CRRU itself, according to campaign chairman Dr Alan Buckle: "This is the absolute need to control rodents effectively and help the people doing so to 'think-wildlife' and use rodent control products responsibly."

According to the training programme, it is estimated that the 10.5 million UK rat population consumes 210 tonnes of food a day and is the cause of 50 per cent of farm fires. Disease organisms transmitted from rats to humans include Cryptosporidium, Campylobacter, Listeria, Toxoplasma, Leptospira and Salmonella. An infestation of only 10 rats produces 146,000 droppings and 54 litres of urine in a year.

At the launch, Dr Buckle said Sparsholt College's status as a Centre for Vocational Excellence in game and wildlife management made it an ideal partner for this project. "The college identified key areas of its courses where an up to date picture of responsible use of rodenticides fitted in well with what they were already teaching about practical rodent control," he said.

At Sparsholt College, lecturer in game and wildlife management Martin Edwards is the project's content adviser. He said that, in a single step, the programme could place all colleges at the leading edge of current knowledge and practice in responsible rodenticide use. "This is a good example of co-operation and sharing best practice that is part of the LBCNC ethos," he said. "On many rural-based courses, we have to teach the use of rodenticides for pest control. It is imperative for every college to keep abreast of current issues, foremost among which is responsible practice."

The five-modules of the training programme are based on the CRRU code of good practice, which itself contains four 'always' and three 'never' elements:

ALWAYS:

- have a planned approach.
- record quantity of bait & where it is placed.
- use enough baiting points.
- collect and dispose of rodent bodies.

NEVER:

- leave bait exposed to non-target animals and birds.
- fail to inspect bait regularly.
- leave bait down at the end of the treatment.

At the responsible rodent control college programme's launch, chairman of The Pesticides Forum James Clarke said that rodent control was important in ensuring efficient and safe food production but, if poorly managed, the use of rodenticides could result in unintended consequences to wildlife.

"This development to improve and recognise the training of rodenticide users is a very good example of how to improve practice and reduce any misuse," he said. "I am pleased to see CRRU working with training providers and BASIS to develop this new course.

"This will help improve best practice among new operators. I look forward to working further with CRRU to develop other initiatives aimed at recognising best practice in this important area."

Since 1996, The Pesticides Forum has worked to encourage the responsible use of pesticides. In particular, it enables communication between all stakeholders and encourages best practice.

The Campaign for Responsible Rodenticide Use (CRRU) is backed by the following companies: Barrettine Environmental Health Limited, Bell Laboratories Inc, Killgerm Limited, Novartis Animal Health UK Limited, Rentokil Initial plc, PelGar Limited, Sorex Limited.

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Notes to editors

[1] Programme content: Details about the five modules is contained in the supporting booklet, issued with this press release as a PDF file. There are five modules under the general title "**Rodents, Agriculture and Wildlife Management in the UK**":

1. *Why control rodents.*

Provides an understanding of the problems caused by rodents to the rural economy. Particular emphasis is given to diseases carried by rodents and to the quest for quality within accreditation schemes driving an increased requirement for rural rodenticide use.

2. *Rodent species – identification and behaviour.*

Outlines important pest recognition characteristics and behaviour relevant to implementing effective control. Draws attention to other non-target rodents that may be affected by rural rodent control programmes.

3. *How to control rodents on farms.*

Explains the fundamentals of applying rodenticides safely and effectively in rural settings, including additional information for gamekeepers who apply rodenticides away from buildings.

4. *Environmental impacts of rodenticides.*

Describes primary and secondary routes of wildlife exposure to rodenticides, adverse effects of rodenticides and distribution of residues among key wildlife species.

5. *The Campaign for Responsible Rodenticide Use.*

Gives the objectives of the CRRU initiative, the important mitigation measures required to reduce wildlife contamination and the potential benefits of each of the measures recommended.

[2] Background facts about rodent control in the UK

Rat population: 10.5 million (Source: International Pest Control, Jul-Aug 2004, vol 46, p202-203, quoting Roger Quy of the Central Science Laboratory (CSL).

Annual cost estimate of on-farm damage caused by rats: £15-30 million.

Amount of food consumed per day by rats: 210 tonnes.

Percentage of farm fires caused by rat damage: 50 per cent.

Disease organisms transmitted by rats include: Cryptosporidium, Campylobacter, Listeria, Toxoplasma, Leptospira, Salmonella.

Contamination of rats' habitat: Small infestation of 10 rats produces 146,000 droppings and 54 litres of urine in a year.

Compelling reasons for controlling rodents:

- Prevent:
 - Consumption of foodstuffs.
 - Contamination and fouling.
 - Physical damage to property, structures and installations.
 - Transmission of diseases to humans and animals.
 - Damage to wildlife and game birds.
- Provide:
 - Compliance with requirements of audit schemes.

[3] Sources of further information

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