Possum and rat control using brodifacoum poison

Why is brodifacoum used for possum and rat control?

Brodifacoum is a highly effective possum and rat toxin. It can be used:

- to effectively control rats and possums at the same time
- to reduce moderate possum and rat numbers to very low levels
- for private landowners to take responsibility for possum and rat control on their land.

Brodifacoum bait is very unlikely to cause bait shyness as the target animals rarely associate poisoning symptoms with eating the bait. This is due to the time lag between eating a lethal dose and the onset of symptoms (usually several days).

How is brodifacoum used?

Brodifacoum is only registered for use in bait stations which can be placed out of reach to non-target animals.

For control on farmland or lifestyle blocks bait stations can be placed in bush areas and shelterbelts. Stations should be placed approximately 100-150 metres apart. For smaller sections one bait station in the garden should be sufficient for rodent and possum control.

Bait stations hold up to 2 kg of brodifacoum pellets. Bait stations are refilled at intervals of two weeks up to three months, depending on the level of possum or rat activity.

Brodifacoum can be purchased from Greater Wellington Regional Council (GWRC) or farm supply stores without a poison licence.

Most people know brodifacoum by the brand names of Pestoff or Talon.

When using brodifacoum remember -

- bait stations must be installed out of reach of children, pets and stock
- warning signs must be erected at all main access points where brodifacoum bait stations are placed.

Risks to humans

The poison poses a low risk when used correctly. Brodifacoum is an anti-coagulant chemical that if taken inhibits the clotting ability of blood. A lethal dose for humans is estimated to be about 15mg of pure brodifacoum per kg of bodyweight (National Pest Control Agencies, 2011). This equates to approximately 50kg of bait for an adult or 5kg of bait for a toddler (several full bait stations worth).

Typical symptoms of brodifacoum poisoning include:

- bleeding gums and excessive bleeding from minor cuts
- increased tendency to bruising
- blood in urine and faeces.

Further information on brodifacoum poisoning can be obtained from the National Poisons Centre 03 4797227

In an emergency dial 0800 764 766
Risk to dogs
When used correctly brodifacoum poison poses a low risk to dogs. Dogs can suffer brodifacoum poisoning if they:
- eat the bait directly from bait stations (more than 250g)
- scavenge several possum carcasses containing brodifacoum
In areas controlled with brodifacoum keep dogs under strict control and prevent them from scavenging dead animals.
Cats are not attracted to the cereal pellets.

Treatment
If your dog eats poison or a poisoned carcass induce vomiting with washing soda crystals. If a pet displays the following poisoning symptoms take it to the nearest veterinary clinic -
- bleeding gums
- blood in urine and faeces
- depression
- vomiting.

Poisoned animals can be given Vitamin K1, an effective antidote. This may need to be administered for several weeks.
Do not rely on treatment. Prevention is the only sure way of protecting animals and pets from poisoning.

Risk to livestock
Bait stations must be placed in locations which cannot be accessed by livestock.
Livestock exposed to brodifacoum should not be sent to slaughter, sold or eaten.
Research has shown that anticoagulant toxins stay in the body for many months, if not years. It is an offence to send animals for slaughter that contain chemical residues above prescribed limits. In the case of poisons any detectable residue is considered a violation. If you decide to send contaminated livestock to the meatworks, you must contact the Ministry of Primary Industries veterinarian at the processing plant before freighting the animals.
If dairy cattle become exposed to brodifacoum, immediately notify the dairy supply company. If deaths occur in sheep or cattle, the entire flock or herd should be withheld for nine months.
Please notify GWRC if you suspect livestock has been exposed to poison baits. GWRC may have to notify the Medical Officer of Health.

Risks when harvesting feral game
Wild animals cannot be hunted commercially for consumption in areas where poisons have been laid (including in the buffer zones) until the specified caution period has elapsed. The buffer zones for brodifacoum are:
- within 5 km of the poisoning area for pigs
- within 2 km of the poisoning area for other large species such as deer.
A certified supplier cannot supply carcases taken from a brodifacoum operational area (including the buffer zone) within three years of the poisoning terminating. These precautions are also recommended for recreational hunters.

Environmental effects
Brodifacoum is not soluble in water and binds strongly to soils – making it almost immobile. It will degrade slowly in soils under aerobic or flooded conditions and plants do not absorb it.
Research shows that brodifacoum can remain in animal livers and may present a danger to other species through both secondary and tertiary poisoning. The half-life of brodifacoum in possum livers is about 36 weeks.

Baits are only used in bait stations, so it is unlikely brodifacoum will be found in waterways.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION ON TRAPPING CONTACT A GWRC BIOSECURITY OFFICER:

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January 2017
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