**Possum control using Cholecalciferol - Vitamin D3 poison (Decal and Feracol)**

**Why we use Cholecalciferol?**

Cholecalciferol in high doses acts by elevating blood calcium levels, causing heart failure. Possums and rodents have a low tolerance to calcium, which makes them particularly sensitive to this type of toxin.

Cholecalciferol 0.8% (8g per kg) or Vitamin D3 occurs naturally in sources such as fortified milk, fish liver oils, butter, egg yolk and liver.

Animals poisoned with cholecalciferol show loss of appetite, reduced body weight and elevated calcium concentrations in blood and tissue. Possums die in four to seven days.

Cholecalciferol was developed in the USA as a rodenticide in the 1980s.

**How is Cholecalciferol used?**

Greater Wellington uses two forms of cholecalciferol poison for possum control; trade names – Decal and Feracol.

Decal is in a cereal pellet form dyed green. The pellets are either placed loose inside a bait station and/or packaged into plastic bags weighing 30grams placed inside a bait station. All bait and bait stations are attached to trees, out of the reach of domestic and farm animals. Bait weighing 30g is one lethal dose for a possum.

Feracol is a peanut based paste bait dyed blue/green. Feracol Strikers are 18g of Feracol packaged into a potato starch bait station and are attached to trees.

To minimise the risk of people eating the baits accidentally, bait stations, plastic bags, Strikers are labelled with a danger warning.

Cholecalciferol poison breaks down on contact with soil, light and heat and is virtually insoluble in water. It has a low toxicity to birds, and is of low secondary poisoning risk. It is non-persistent in livestock.

**Precautions**

- Children should be kept away from areas where cholecalciferol is used.
- Do not handle bait, bait stations, or bait bags
- Do not handle dead possums or rats
- Keep dogs on a lead at all times
- Do not allow dogs to scavenge animal carcasses

Warning signs will be erected at all main access points where cholecalciferol bait stations are placed.

**Further information can be obtained from the National Poisons Centre, phone 03 479 7248, or in an emergency, 03 474 7000 or 0800 764 766.**
Danger to dogs and cats

Cholecalciferol poison is toxic to dogs and cats. They are susceptible to poisoning from eating baits directly. Dogs and cats are less susceptible to poisoning from eating poisoned carcasses as the dying possum breaks down the poison. However, poisoned carcasses still pose a risk if a dog eats several carcasses.

The smaller the dog, the less bait or possums it would need to eat to be poisoned. A lethal dose for a dog is 40-80mg per kg. This would mean a 5kg fox terrier would have to eat 25g of cholecalciferol bait, which is one-bait bag or one and a half strikers. The lethal dose for a 25kg huntaway is 125g of bait, meaning it would have to eat just four bait bags or seven strikers.

Well-fed domestic cats are unlikely to scavenge dead possums or rats or eat the bait directly.

Poisoning symptoms

- Loss of appetite
- Weakness, nausea, vomiting
- Diarrhoea
- Increased thirst and frequent urinating.

Treatment

If you suspect a dog has eaten poison or dead animals, give it an emetic immediately (this will cause the dog to vomit). This is not an antidote. Take the animal to a vet immediately. A vet can administer a special treatment to counter the poisoning action.

Emetic

Place a 1cm block of washing soda (sodium carbonate) down the back of the dog’s throat. Allow 10 minutes after administering the washing soda for the dog to vomit.

Further doses may be given if the first dose is not effective. A repeat dose will not be harmful.

Washing soda (sodium carbonate) is available from most supermarkets and grocery stores in the washing powder aisle.