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RODENTICIDE DEVELOPMENT

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It is unfortunate that the development of rodenticide products has not kept pace with other orchard needs. This may be due to 1) long term availability of an inexpensive material, 2) return-on-investment for development costs of new products in lieu of this availability.

A critical situation is developing in that the standard material is not performing as well as it did in the past. This may be related to the development of areas of resistance and the increase in pine vole activity.

While state labels and 24(c) registrations have allowed new products to be used in problem areas; the progress toward federal registration will be slower than in the past; particularly in these times of EPA label reviews and policy making.

The commercial development of pesticides is necessarily related to cost and profit. Generally it costs 10 to 12 million dollars from synthesis to registration of a compound during an average 7 year development period. These efforts are usually expended first in a major crop area where hopefully, initial good profits can help defray research and development costs and additional investments in other crop registrations. The evolution of the federal IR-4 group is directly related to the grower need for small crop registration and the nominal return-on-investment for commercial company pursuits. The development of fungicides and rodenticides, due to narrower margins, follow similar patterns in that unless a "world beater" or a void arises, commercial investments have not been notable.

It therefore seems apparent that growers faced with tree losses from vole damage must voice their concern, individually and through their associations, to state and federal research agencies so that adequate funding of meaningful control programs can be initiated.