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## EC1162 Rat Control on Nebraska Farms

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# RAT CONTROL

ON  
NEBRASKA  
FARMS



EXTENSION SERVICE  
UNIVERSITY OF NEBRASKA COLLEGE OF AGRICULTURE  
AND U. S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE  
COOPERATING  
W. V. LAMBERT, DIRECTOR



# Rat Control on Nebraska Farms

Robert W. Helm, Extension Entomologist

Rat control is only as effective as the amount of time and effort you put into it. Many poison preparations will give excellent results, but only under ideal conditions. It is next to impossible to achieve the necessary ideal conditions on any Nebraska farm without spending a considerable amount of money and effort. The two main principles in any rat poisoning program are (1) remove all sources of food, and (2) remove all shelter or hiding places. If a farmer were to carry out both of these "musts" completely, he would obviously have to shut down farm operations. So we must content ourselves with partial or temporary control and try to decrease the number of rats as much as we are able.

Rat troubles are worse in the fall when food and shelter in the field disappear. At this time of year the farm buildings look more promising to the rats.

Rat troubles have increased with the "sealed corn" program.

Rats are suspicious animals and any successful control measure must allow for this factor.

A simple, easy-to-follow method of rat control is outlined in this circular. You may not get complete control by this method, but you can cut down the rat population considerably without spending very much money.

1. The more you do to rat-proof stored grain the more success you will have. This includes keeping any doors or openings to grain bins closed tightly when not in use. Heavy wire screening of the lower portions will help to keep rats out. Solid sheet metal works better. Loose grain lying around is a picnic for rats. Old piles of machinery parts stacked against the side of a building are ideal shelters. Old lumber piles, fence posts, railroad ties and piles of telephone poles are excellent homes. Straw stack butts, baled hay piles and abandoned or little-used buildings all hold a great many rat families. The number of such places you are able to rat-proof will determine the degree of success you obtain from the rat poison.

2. Now if you wish to use a rat poison, you should have a fair degree of success. We suggest that you first obtain a fortified red squill poison. Red squill is a fast acting poison that will give you quick command of the rat situation. When buying red squill, be careful of one point. The label will state the strength of the poison in terms of how much it takes to kill a rat. This figure should be between 500 and 600 mg. (milligrams). Do not buy red squill if the label says it takes more than 500 to 600 milligrams. The label usually contains directions for mixing this poison in a bait. We have found that the following recipe works very well, and is enough to thoroughly cover the average farm with a good treatment.

One 2-oz. package fortified red squill (500 to 600 mg/kg strength)

1/2 pound hamburger

One 8-oz. can fish (mackerel is most reasonable)

Two cupfuls of oatmeal (approx.)

One cupful of corn oil (from your grocer)

Mix this thoroughly by hand.

Cut wax paper into a number of four-inch squares. Place a teaspoonful of bait mixture on one of these papers, pick up the four corners and twist the ends to form a small packet. Rats often prefer to carry their food to the nest to eat. These small packets will be just the right size for them to carry.

Go around your buildings and place these poison packets in groups of two or three wherever you find signs of rat burrows or rat feeding. Because these packets contain poison, you should observe several precautions.

- a. Try to place them where other animals cannot reach them.
- b. Keep some sort of record of where you place them.
- c. After two days, pick up and destroy as many packets as you can find.

These precautions apply to the use of red squill only. If other poisons are used, follow the package directions very carefully.



3. After using red squill for a quick-kill, you can use WARFARIN, a recently discovered poison, to kill the remaining rats. If you purchase an 8-oz. package of a WARFARIN PREMIX, it can be mixed with corn meal or other grain products to make enough bait for a good baiting program. Warfarin, although slow acting, is an excellent rat poison that kills those rats which receive small repeated doses of it.

Warfarin baits should be kept in protected bait stations. It is absolutely necessary that you keep these bait stations well supplied with warfarin mix, so that rats can obtain some every day for a week to ten days. Simple bait stations can be made of scrap pieces of wood to keep the poison available to the rats and at the same time prevent other animals and children from getting into it. An old orange crate makes an excellent bait station. By dusting a heavy layer of flour or other white powder around the bait stations, you can see whether rats are visiting the stations.

Warfarin baits can be left around the farm in bait stations for long periods of time, to aid in killing any new rats that may come in.

**CAUTION:** Red Squill and warfarin are the two safest rat poisons now on the market. However, they are poisons and you should be reasonably careful when using them. It is safest to follow all precautions on the package.