

Protecting Farms, Fields *and* Wildlife

by Supervisor Linda Parks, July 2016

It was heartening to see over 100 people show up for a symposium we organized featuring alternative ways to control rodents without killing off wildlife. The symposium served to educate homeowners, pesticide applicators, facilities and park managers, farmers, and school districts about alternative methods of rodent control instead of using anticoagulants which move up the food chain and poison wildlife and pets.

Attendees learned about the impact anticoagulant rodenticides have on local wildlife, the science behind effective alternatives, and positive examples from those using the alternatives. For the first section, Dr. Seth Riley from the National Park Service presented results of studies that found anticoagulant rodenticides in 95% of the bobcats, 91% of the mountain lions and 83% of the coyotes in the Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area. The second section of the symposium had experts discuss the scientific basis for various methods of controlling rodents that do not entail the use of anticoagulants. It was explained that the type of control should be based on the type of rodent targeted. Then we closed with presentations about how these alternatives were applied in “real life” situations, at farms, flood control levees, schools, parks, and government office buildings.

Alternative methods to rodenticides include being proactive by sealing holes and cracks in buildings and putting tops on outdoor trash containers, fencing, trapping, putting rocks in a trench to make an underground wall to keep gophers out, vegetative barriers, injecting exhaust fumes in rodent holes, using gas cartridges, flooding, plowing burrows, filling the burrows with cement, use of raptors like owls, hawks and kestrels as natural predators by adding owl boxes and raptor perches, removing vegetation that provide habitat and pathways for rodents, and even using coyote urine as a deterrent (you can buy it at predatorpee.com among other sites on the internet).

Pepperdine University and Oak Park Unified School District presented their pesticide free rodent control systems. Senator Pavley presented an award to the Oak Park Unified School District for their District-wide efforts to be poison free. The Ventura County government buildings and parks also do not use anticoagulants, and the County of Ventura has implemented an Integrated Pest Management Program to reduce and eliminate the use of these poisons.

We know the harmful anticoagulant rodenticides kill wildlife by weakening their immune system making them more vulnerable to mange, and causing them to bleed internally, both which lead to higher mortality rates in area wildlife. This symposium showed there are alternatives that are safer. Several pest control companies sent employees and they were able to get continuing education credit for attending.

Our appreciation to our speakers:

Seth Riley – Wildlife Ecologist, National Park Service and Adjunct Associate Professor UCLA

Roger Baldwin – Human-Wildlife Conflict Resolution Specialist, UC Cooperative Extension

Niamh Quinn – Vertebrate Pest Advisor, UC Cooperative Extension

Phil Boise – Urban Ag Ecology

David Headrick – Professor, Dept. of Horticulture & Crop Science, California Polytechnic State University, San Luis Obispo

Tracy Off – Topa Mountain Ranch Organic Olive Oil

Karl Novak - Deputy Director, Operations & Maintenance Division, Ventura County Watershed Protection District

Rosalind Harris – Manager of Facilities, Ventura County General Services Agency

Nicolle Taylor – Associate Vice President for Administration, Pepperdine University

Julie Suarez – Director of Business Operations, Oak Park Unified School District