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Time to rethink first generation rodenticides

Championed for their ruthless population control, second generation rodenticides seemingly deliver all the requirements for today's user who is keen to eliminate an infestation as quickly and as effectively as possible. In spite of this, and in light of recent concerns surrounding these products, there is an argument suggesting that first generation solutions have an increasingly valuable role in a modern integrated pest management (IPM) approach.

"First-generation rodenticides are very misunderstood. Over the years they have been tarred with the same brush as warfarin. In other words, as old, ineffective and suffering from widespread resistance," says Ken Black, Bayer's rural hygiene manager.

While these comments are perhaps largely true for warfarin, many people overlook the huge diversity amongst first generation products and formulations containing the likes of coumatetralyl, which have far fewer resistant strains and therefore should be a legitimate consideration.

"In the regions of the country which are known to have high first generation resistance, we've come across cases where products containing coumatetralyl have managed to control infestations without any trouble. In these instances the problem was clearly never resistance, but bait palatability."

He adds that in order for control to be achieved, a broad perspective needs to be taken. "There's no such thing as a 'silver bullet' in rodent control. Farm management and standards of hygiene have as much to do with effective control as rodenticide choice. Initially, users should consider what measures can be undertaken to limit rodent activity without laying any bait at all," he says.

"If there are areas ideal for nesting, and food and water sources available, every attempt to remove those should be made. As not only will they play a large role in attracting the rodents, they will also impede the uptake of any bait that is laid.

"Once this has been done, and it's identified that a rodenticide is needed, the correct choice of product for the particular baiting situation is important. Within the armoury of second generation products, Rodilon® leads the way and has been developed in four palatable formulations, enabling the user to choose a bait which is most suited to the environment or the target pest.



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“Such an approach may well be complimented with first generation chemistry, such as Racumin® Foam, containing coumatetralyl, which is a newly launched specialised water-based foam formulation, effectively designed to work using the rodent’s natural grooming habits.

“It can be placed in areas where the rodents are known to pass, such as access holes, cavity walls and pipeworks. It’s then transferred to the pest’s coat as they brush past and is ingested straight into its blood stream during routine grooming, which is advantageous in limiting non-target species.”

With education programmes led by organisations such as the Campaign for Responsible Rodenticide Use (CRRU) and trade associations to improve best practice and consider alternatives to second generations, now may well be the time for the industry to rethink first generation products again, and challenge the status quo that they represent. “The current mind-set of ‘use a rodenticide first to guarantee a fast control’ needs to change,” says Ken.

“There will always be cases when a second generation rodenticide is the best course of action, but as with first generation products, we recommend they’re used within an IPM programme,” he says.

