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Department of Agriculture  
Washington, D.C.

March 1944

Dear Sirs: I have the honor to acknowledge the receipt of your letter of the 15th inst. regarding the matter mentioned therein. The Bureau is currently reviewing the information submitted and will advise you of the results of its investigation as soon as possible.

In the meantime, you are requested to continue to cooperate fully with the Bureau's efforts to determine the facts of the case. Any additional information or documents that may be helpful in this regard should be forwarded to the Bureau at the earliest opportunity.

Very truly yours,  
Director

Enclosed for you are two copies of a report prepared by the Bureau on the subject mentioned in your letter. This report contains a summary of the information received to date and the Bureau's preliminary conclusions.

Very truly yours,  
Director

Very truly yours,  
Director

HOUSEKEEPERS' CHAT

Tuesday, April 26, 1938

(FOR BROADCAST USE ONLY)

Subject: "QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS." Information from the Bureau of Biological Survey, United States Department of Agriculture. Publications offered: "Rat Control," Farmers' Bulletin 1533, and "Rat Proofing Buildings and Premises," Farmers' Bulletin 1638.

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The questions up for answer have to do with a couple of familiar four-legged pests -- rats and mice. The wife of a storekeeper in Minnesota asks if there isn't something better than a tabby cat to keep mice out of a grocery store. And a housewife in South Carolina inquires for the "latest method of poisoning rats." Several other listeners want information on both rats and mice.

So I'm going to pass along to you some facts from the men in the Bureau of Biological Survey who have made careful studies of these pests.

In general, the control methods that work with one are effective with the other. But getting rid of rats is likely to be more of a job than getting rid of mice.

The Survey men say that traps are still the best method of dealing with mice in a house, or a store, or a small farm -- those little wooden-based snap traps that cost so little you can afford to use a dozen or so. And by the way, you can do the best job by using many traps at once. Clean and rebait and reset the traps every night and place them so that the mice, as they follow their natural runways along walls and behind objects, will pass over the trigger.

Fresh bait every night is very important. And though cheese is what you hear most about, the Survey men have found that mice are more tempted by a variety of foods. They suggest fresh bread and cake, fried bacon, sardines, nut meats and bananas as well as cheese with rolled oats or other cereal sprinkled over the trap to make it extra tempting.

But to control mice on a larger scale, you may need more drastic measures such as poisoning. For details, I'll suggest a bulletin. Whether rats or mice or both are bothering you, you'll find complete information in Farmers' Bulletin No. 1533 called "Rat Control." As long as the supply lasts, you are welcome to a copy of this bulletin if you write the Department of Agriculture in Washington, D. C. Once more -- "Rat Control," Farmers' Bulletin 1533.

In most cases, the Survey men advise using poison baits for destroying rats, although traps bring good results if carefully used and a poisonous gas called calcium cyanide is highly effective in gassing rats in their burrows and other enclosed places and even in partially open places like corncribs. Any one of a number of poisons will kill rats, but the biologists recommend bait mixed with red squill powder because though fatal to rats, it is harmless to people and other animals. Other rat-poisons are dangerous to domestic animals and children.



4/26/38

But killing a few rats is only temporary help after all. The way to get rid of them permanently is to build them out of all buildings on your property and do away with open garbage pails or dumping grounds or other hiding or nesting or feeding places for rats. Which reminds me of another bulletin. If you are planning to do any building -- put up a house or remodel a house, or build a barn, poultry house, pigsty, corncrib, or even an outside cellar, you'll want first to read the bulletin that tells how to make the structure proof against rats. So here's another name and number to jot down on a postcard: "Rat Proofing Buildings and Premises," Farmers' Bulletin No. 1638. Order it from the Department of Agriculture, Washington, D. C.

But let's go back to red squill, the approved rat poison which is relatively harmless to people, and to domestic animals and fowls, even to wild animals and birds, but fatal to rats and mice. Red squill is a plant that grows along the shores of the Mediterranean Sea. It has a bulb like an onion which, when dried and powdered and mixed with tempting food, is good-bye to rats. Other animals either won't touch food mixed with red squill or will vomit it. The Survey men tried it out on cats, dogs, chickens, pigeons, pigs, prairie dogs, pocket gophers, and even on themselves. No harm done anywhere along the line. But they put on 150 cooperative county, city, and town campaigns using red squill against rats, and the rat population practically disappeared in those sections.

You can buy red squill powder at a drug store. And here's how the Survey men suggest serving it to rats. They advise putting out generous bait and a variety of it the first night to destroy every rat at one application if possible. Otherwise the rats that survive will be wary of touching future baits. Fresh fish ground in a meat chopper is one of the most attractive baits for rats -- fresh fish or canned salmon, mackerel or sardines. Make a paste of one ounce of red squill powder and a little water and then add it to a pound of fish and mix.

Or mix the squill-and-water paste with fresh ground hamburger steak. Rats like cereals, too -- oatmeal, graham flour or corn meal when mixed to a mush with sweet milk or water. Add an ounce of dry squill powder to a pound of cereal meal and then moisten with milk or water. If you serve fruits or vegetables for bait, slice them and dust the squill powder over the slices. Before putting out the bait, be sure no other food is where the rats can reach it. Put out the bait in the late afternoon so that it will be reasonably fresh when the rats come out to feed at night. A large number of small baits work better than a few large baits. Sometimes prebaiting with unpoisoned food is a good way to catch the rats unawares. After three days collect all the bait and destroy it.

But as I said before, you'll find complete directions in that bulletin called "Rat Control."

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