



**Council Member Report
For the Committee of the Whole Meeting of September 3, 2020**

Date: August 28, 2020
From: Councillor Ben Isitt and Councillor Jeremy Loveday
Subject: Rodenticides in the City of Victoria

Background:

Rodenticides, colloquially referred to as “rat poisons,” are pesticides formulated as tasty baits used to kill rats, mice and other target rodents. While the Provincial government acknowledges that anticoagulant baits “cause death by internal bleeding and present a moderate to high risk of secondary poisoning to other animals that might eat the poisoned rat,” Provincial laws permit their continued use.

Rodenticide use is regulated at the Provincial level and therefore under current legislation the City of Victoria is unable to implement a complete ban on the application of anticoagulant rodenticides throughout the municipality. However, the City has the authority to eliminate their use in municipal facilities and on municipal lands. This is consistent with the approach taken in jurisdictions such as the District of Saanich and the District of North Vancouver.

It is therefore recommended that Council adopt a policy to eliminate the use of anticoagulant rodenticides in municipal facilities and on municipal lands within the City of Victoria, with immediate effect, and lobby the Province of British Columbia to eliminate their use generally across the province through a province-wide ban.

Harmful Impacts

Many of B.C.’s treasured wildlife species face serious risks of anticoagulant rodenticide poisoning. It has been well-documented that these products poison non-target species on all levels of the food chain. Examples include owls, hawks, small birds, earthworms, coyotes and even cougars. It is not uncommon for pets and children to be poisoned.

Non-target species can be impacted by direct (primary) and indirect (secondary) poisoning:

- **Primary poisoning:** Anticoagulant rodenticides are administered in a tamper-proof black box. Rats feed on poison bait blocks inside these boxes. Any animal the same size or smaller than a rat can directly retrieve the poison in this same manner. Many non-target species, including songbirds and shrews, are directly poisoned in this way.
- **Secondary poisoning:** When a rat or other small animal consumes the poison, they are not killed immediately. They can continue to live for days to weeks following the initial consumption. During this time, they continue to feed on the poison (recognizing it as a food source). The highly toxic, persistent, bioaccumulative nature of second-generation anticoagulant rodenticides makes them particularly dangerous to secondary consumers, especially where the prey animal has ingested several doses. Nearing death, poisoned

animals become lethargic and more vulnerable, making for an easy meal for predators. Owls and other birds of prey are at a disproportionately high risk of secondary poisoning because of their dependence on rodents as a food source.

Not only are owls a treasured species in our community, they are natural predators to rats and other rodents. A single owl eats around 3 rats per night, approximately 1000 per year. By allowing the use of anticoagulant rodenticides, we are killing off the natural predators and helping the rat population to grow overall. It is entirely counter-productive.

Recommendation:

That Council:

1. Adopts the policy of introducing a complete ban on use of anticoagulant rodenticides on all City of Victoria owned properties, with immediate effect.
2. Directs staff to communicate this policy direction to residents and businesses, including information on the harmful impacts of anticoagulant rodenticides and the availability of more ecologically sustainable alternatives.
3. Requests that the Mayor write, on behalf of Council, to the provincial Minister of Environment, requesting that the Province of British Columbia introduce a province-wide ban on the use of anticoagulant rodenticides, to increase protection for wildlife species.

Respectfully submitted,



Councillor Isitt



Councillor Loveday