

MEDIA STATEMENT

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Current technologies effective against mice

With mice continuing to wreak havoc across many of Australia's agricultural regions, a leading pest control expert is urging customers to use proven technologies.

While new broadacre-based mouse bait using 50g/kg of Zinc Phosphide became available earlier this year under an emergency permit – and actively promoted by GRDC and CSIRO – a leading pest expert cautions it may not be needed in most cases.

Managing Director of vertebrate pest control company Animal Control Technologies Australia (ACTA), Dr Linton Staples, says Zinc Phosphide is the only approved chemical control measure for mice in large-scale agriculture in Australia.

"We were pioneers in using Zinc Phosphide, and it remains relatively cheap, targeted to mice and rats in agricultural situations, and leaves no environmental residue," he stressed.

At 25g/kg, it is the active chemical in ACTA's product MOUSEOFF® – the most-used broadacre mouse bait in Australia which has been highly successful in saving billions of dollars' worth of crops over 24 years.

"This or lower doses are the standard dosage used internationally," Dr Staples says.

Dr Staples says significant research and experience over decades have demonstrated that baiting provides the only effective means of large-scale mouse control in crops. Many crops have been saved and the benefit of using bait far exceeds its cost.

In response to the Australian Pesticides and Veterinary Medicines Authority (APVMA) emergency permit to allow the increased level of Zinc Phosphide in mouse baits such as MOUSEOFF®, ACTA has responded to demands from producers, and has already made and supplied several hundred tonnes of this experimental product.

"We are not opposed to having this available, but we are just not sure that it is always appropriate to increase chemical usage if the higher dosage does not do a better job. Data on methods and results has not been released despite many requests, so it is a big step for all manufacturers to suddenly change product specs," Dr Staples says.

At a recent GRDC webinar to Western Australian grain growers, CSIRO Research Officer Mr Steve Henry said about an unspecified brand 50g/kg at three trial sites near Parkes NSW: "Results showed that greater than 75% of the time you will kill over 90% of the mice."

Dr Staples says these results are yet to be published or peer reviewed, and ACTA's experience and farmer feedback over decades show that registered 25g/kg MOUSEOFF products also kill more than 90% of mice within one or two days of application in most rural situations.

"While acknowledging that a small number of farmers do require second or third applications, as allowed on the APVMA approved label, the vast majority of users achieve excellent results after one application with no non-target impact," he says.

"Occasionally, for a variety of reasons, mouse numbers don't drop to target levels after an initial baiting and farmers have to rebait. For example, mice move from other properties or the mouse density is so high that some do not get to eat the poisoned bait. However, under both of these scenarios, bait with more chemical will not increase efficiency.

“The 50g/kg dose bait is no silver bullet, and recent CSIRO presentations recommending rebaiting with this dose and working with neighbours demonstrates this.”

Dr Staples says ACTA is supplying the emergency permit 50g/kg product in addition to its approved formulations, but the more complex manufacturing process and limited supply of inputs, exacerbated by COVID impacts on global freight, means delays and higher costs for our farmers.

“If customers of our brand and all other manufacturers return to using the proven 25g/kg dosage, we can shorten current backlogs of orders across the nation, and save more crops,” he says.

“Agrichemical production staff and ACTA’s suppliers are all working hard to support their customers and win the war on mice in an exceptional demand surge. Some fantastic support has been given in the supply chain here and overseas to maximise bait supplies,” he said.

Dr Staples is keen to reassure producers that the current 25g/kg Zinc Phosphide products such as MOUSEOFF (made with sterilised seed quality grain) and MOUSEOFF ECONOBAIT (made with unsterilised seed quality grain) have proven high performance over 24 years.

“ACTA has immediate stocks of a 25g/kg back up option (MOUSEOFF Econobait) available so that no crops need be lost while supplies of sterilised grain for the premium product are increased,” Dr Staples says.

“These and other APVMA registered products are consistent with international use of Zinc Phosphide for broadacre mouse control at 20-25g/kg.”

He warned that Australia’s use of high chemical doses could come into question internationally since no major country allows or needs such high rates of chemical application.

Baits are a formulated product so performance can differ between brands. Dr Staples recommends that anyone who has an issue with baits should contact the manufacturer with the product batch numbers, so they can investigate.

“ACTA is committed to continue working with industry and research organisations to field test the unregistered 50g/kg bait and as that process continues, we urge customers to stick with the tried and true 25g/kg dosage. This means that the area of crops protected can be maximised with the chemical supplies that are available now and in transit by air freight,” Dr Staples says.

“Overuse of the unregistered 50g/kg bait could lead to chemical shortages and supply challenges, meaning some farmers might not be able to save crops in time.

“Despite these concerns ACTA is making as much normal and high-dose product as possible in the hope that new chemical supply planned can sustain this program.”

For more information about MOUSEOFF, click [here](#).

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About Animal Control Technologies Australia

Animal Control Technologies Australia (ACTA) is Australia’s leading research and manufacturing company specialising in control of vertebrate pest animals including foxes, wild dogs, feral pigs, rabbits, plague mice, plague rats, some invasive ant species and cane toads. For nearly 30 years since its first product FOXOFF, ACTA has developed, registered and manufactured a range of world class products, to help protect farmer livelihoods and the environment from pest animal damage.