Rodent Control without rodenticides



Audubon on Marco Island conducted a five-year study on the cause of death for 59 Burrowing Owls. 55 of them had neurotoxins from rat poison in their blood. On Lido Key in Sarasota County, necropsies on eaglets have shown they died from rat poison.

Caution: Rat bait boxes commonly contain poisons that the rats eat and subsequently die. **However, they don't die in the boxes. Instead, they die later and their carcasses are often picked up and eaten by eagles, hawks, owls, cats, bobcats, dogs and other animals. Those animals in turn suffer from secondary poisoning that can kill them or badly damage their neurological systems.**

Your first line of defense should be sanitation and seal all openings to your house



JUST SAY NO... TO RODENTICIDES

Advocates, municipalities take matters into their own hands and ditch poisons.

BY NICOLE RIVARD

People flock to Florida's Marco Island in the summer because its beaches and sunsets are second to none, and it offers endless opportunities to play golf, participate in water sports, and connect with nature.

But vacationers and retirees are not the only ones fond of the Gulf Coast destination, which measures six miles long and four miles wide and is just a two-hour drive through the Everglades from Miami.

Burrowing owls find it idyllic too. Unlike most owls, they're active during the day, often standing outside their burrows. So, encounters with these magical, five-ounce, long-legged, nine-inch-tall raptors are typical.

It's mind blowing that some property owners and developers considered them pests and drove over nest holes, crushing the owls inside. In 2016, concerned residents founded Owl Watch, to help monitor and protect them under the guidance of Audubon Western Everglades (AWE) and the University of Florida.

So, when the number of burrowing owls dying after consuming poisoned rats started rising dramatically, it did not go unnoticed. After public pressure, the Marco Island City Council voted 7-0 in January to eliminate anticoagulant rodenticides, the most toxic class that work by stopping blood from clotting, at city facilities and switch to alternative rodent control methods.

Much of the public pressure was spearheaded by Brittany Piersma, a wildlife biologist for AWE.

"All it took was one unwavering individual named Brittany Piersma ... and the help of a City Council who cared, including one outspoken councilor who humbly said 'none of God's species are going to be eradicated under our watch,'" Darrin Palumbo, chairman of Marco Island City Council, told Friends of Animals.

Piersma spent three years building the scientific case against rodenticides. She was able to ship 59 deceased owls out for rodenticide testing through a partnership with Florida Fish and Wildlife Commission, the University of Georgia, and the Conservancy of Southwest Florida. Fifty-five returned with various levels and types of rat poison within their systems.

She also educated city staff about alternatives. The city funded a 12-month birth control pilot program at Mackle Park, managed by AWE volunteers. Using the rodent birth control pellets Good Bites, made by WISDOM Good Works, they achieved a 61% reduction of the rat population.

The city manager also reached out to Paul Trapp, owner of Seal Em Out LLC, about the structural exclusion piece at Mackle Park—the permanent building-level fix that the fertility control program alone couldn't provide. Structural exclusion is a permanent pest control method that involves sealing all potential entry points—cracks, gaps, and holes larger than 1/4 inch—in a building's exterior to stop rodents from entering.



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Trapp has now been tapped to provide new poison-free approach services for Marco Island. The program involving the city facilities includes structural exclusion to prevent rodent access, non-toxic monitoring, mechanical trapping and releasing when required, and Good Bites.

Friends of Animals has some positive news about the Good Bites pilot program we helped launch in Fairfield, CT. At press time we were 11 months into the year-long program. In the two locations the town targeted— the Transfer Station and the compactor behind the Fairfield Theatre Company, the switch has not resulted in more rodents. In fact, pellet consumption has gone down, indicating that the animal population has gone down, according to Alaina Gonzalez-White, WISDOM Good Works director of operations. While a full report will be provided at the end, this is cause for celebration!



"Marco Island's decision is a blueprint for other municipalities evaluating alternatives to poisons. At the end of the day, every town has a choice."

–Paul Trapp, Owner, Seal Em Out LLC

BREAKING UP WITH POISON

On Valentine's Day, Trapp shared a photo of himself (d
picted on next page) on social media with the 60+ bait s
tions he pulled from city properties on Marco Island wit
the caption: *Marco Island broke up with poison.*

"Marco Island's decision is a blueprint for other muni
palities evaluating alternatives to poisons. At the end of th
day, every town has a choice," Trapp said. "A temporary s
vice, or a permanent solution. We already know it work
The only real question left is 'what community is next?'"

Newtown, Connecticut, recently became the fir
municipality in the state to adopt a policy to ban the use
anticoagulant rodenticides on town-owned propertie
The Newtown Conservation Commission voted for th
policy at their meeting on Jan. 27, 2026. Then it went
the Board of Selectmen and they voted unanimously in
vor of it April 20.

In October, Friends of Animals, A Place Called Hop
Raptor Rehabilitation Center, and CT Votes for Anima
presented "Think Outside the Bait Box," which revea
the dangers of rodenticides to wildlife, pets, and childre
to the Newtown Conservation Commission.



Then we helped the commissioners explore alternatives such as sanitation and exclusion and Good Bites. We also connected them with municipalities in Massachusetts that have adopted some sort of public lands ban on second-generation anticoagulant rodenticides and testified before the Board of Selectman on April 6.

The town of Arlington was the first in Massachusetts to pass a rodenticide ban on public lands in spring 2022, thanks in large part to wildlife advocate Laura Kiesel.

In 2015, she was exiting her apartment complex and saw a pest control professional putting out more than 20 bait boxes around the property. With her background in wildlife biology, she knew the harm these poisons can do to wildlife, pets, and kids.

In 2021, she brought the issue before the Arlington Select Board, asking that construction companies use Integrated Pest Management strategies before poison, but the ordinance failed.

Then Arlington had a few high-profile wildlife deaths that really upset the community, including a female fledgling eaglet. Kiesel also started the Save Arlington Wildlife website, putting even more of a spotlight on the issue, prompting Town Meeting Member Elaine Crowder to introduce a ban on the use of second-generation anticoagulants.

"I diligently worked to get folks to call the Select Board and their Town Meeting members, lined up experts to testify for hearings, gathered data, and recruited organizational and town committee/commission endorsements for the ordinance," Kiesel said.

After Arlington banned second-generation anticoagulants, some 40 other municipalities have done some sort of public lands ban.

Kiesel's advice to people stepping up to get rodenticides banned in their city or town?

"Pest control companies will try to sabotage your efforts and use fearmongering about how it will cause a 'ratmaggedon,'" she said. "It's important to emphasize that there is no data showing these poisons reduce rats, mice or health issues associated with them, and that investments in things like sanitation, exclusion, and fertility control are superior and proven methods."

Pellets for Rodent Population Management Information and links



•WISDOM Good Bites, LLC, manufactures Good Bites, an herbal rodent food supplement that re-directs rodents from undesired feed sources and helps manage rate of population growth. Good Bites provide a non-lethal natural approach to rodent population management. WISDOM Good Bites™ are formulated for rodents and provided in Good Box feeders that are designed to help exclude other non-target animals. Marco Island goes poison-free January 2026. For more info go to www.cityofmarcoisland.com/page/rodent-control-wildlife and https://wisdomgoodbites.com/

- Evolve Rat and Evolve Mouse soft-bait sausages by Senestech — This fertility control product is not a hormone and does not bioaccumulate. It does not kill rats or mice; it greatly slows their reproduction rate, helping reduce their numbers. It has no effect on other animals (e.g. if a predator eats a rat who's ingested Evolve bait).
- Dry ice — Inexpensive and cost-effective, it can be purchased at welding supply stores and even grocery stores. Find the rat burrows and seal up all exits before putting the dry ice down into the burrows.
- Cayenne pepper — Rats hate it and you can sprinkle it in their pathways or known nest sites. You can use it in compost bins, bird feeders, and chicken coops; it will not harm or repel birds or chickens.
- Goodnature™ A24 Rat and Mouse Trap — Using CO2, the A24 trap is certified humane and toxin-free, kills rodents instantly, and automatically resets for up to 24 kills. (NB: Please use inside another container to prevent other animals from being harmed.)
- Fresh Cab — A botanical repellent
- Rataway — A non-poisonous, non-toxic scented deterrent originally invented to prevent damage to heating and air conditioning equipment, now with a much broader range of uses including cars, food service areas, and more.
- DeTour RoadBlock with Bio-Repellent — All-natural pepper-based repellent irritates rodents' sensory organs and nerve endings, driving them out of contact areas.
- Raticator — An electronic trap that can also be used inside a bait box.
- Evictor® 10K — High-intensity strobe light quickly drives out problem wildlife.
- Pro-Pell — Essential oil mix is applied to foundations and other areas to repel rodents; used by pest control operators.
- Anticimex SMART box

