Coastal Breeze Article

Making Marco Island Poison Free

By Brittany Piersma | Wildlife Biologist | Audubon Of Western Everglades Aug 28, 2025

One of my main goals working for Audubon Western Everglades as their wildlife biologist is to continue the movement of Marco Island becoming a rat poison free city. I have some positive updates from the field! Our pilot program with Mackle Park is almost complete, and the report will be provided by Wisdom Good Works soon. From the perspective of myself and AWE volunteers who have been weekly attending to the feed stations using a fertility feed called Good Bites, the rats within the property have definitely taken to the feed, and we have seen a reduction in physical rats at the stations as well as a reduction in consumption. The point of this feed is not to rid rats entirely, but to get their numbers to a manageable and healthy population while ensuring predators can do their part without getting poisoned! Typically, once numbers are reduced, you no longer see rats during the day as they are not competing for food sources. Mackle Park is an open system, so we have been checking stations twice a week recently to see if there are any changes in the population. In the past month, migratory hawks have been arriving to the area and are learning where the stations are as we see them stalking out their prey. With this current product, we know they are safe to eat! There have been some challenges discovered in figuring out proper exclusions to the building and trash management, but I look forward to meetings with the city, pest control companies, and Wisdom Good Works. Please make note that feeding wildlife around the park is not allowed and will only cause issues for rats as they are drawn to piles of bird seed left by folks feeding ducks and crows. Please educate others and report any feeding you see to park staff and/or code enforcement. During this time period of the pilot program, I have also been testing out the product at several other locations with much success! These include Crescent Beach Condo, Court of Palms Condo, several residential properties, and our wildlife sanctuary in the middle of an urban area on Dogwood Drive. But do not just listen to me, hear from some testimonials below! We are in the process



of making plans with Wisdom Good Works to get Good Bites more accessible to all condos, hotels, businesses, and residential properties on Marco Island. Additionally, we will be promoting for the city to extend this product to all city properties and remove the use of poison. Spread the word to keep wildlife and pets safe!

Opinions:

Pam Carey of Crescent Beach Condos:
"Crescent Beach Condominiums has had a significant issue with rats in the past. We have experienced problems with a large population of rats in the trash room and the garage/maintenance room. These rats have caused damage to our property, including eating through the cables and wires in our brand-new golf cart and eating through wires in the trash room to the controller system. Out of desperation to solve the problem we tried everything, including poison. We removed the use of poison and started using the rat snap traps with peanut butter. While the rat traps were effective, we still had too many rats.
We started to use the Good Bites food alongside the rat snap traps with the peanut butter and after several months we began to notice a difference. After learning how poison could negatively impact and cause harm to other animals, we were eager to find another solution that would help solve the rat issue we had. To date we have found the combination of the rat traps and the Good Bites food to be the most effective in decreasing our rat population. Additionally, we hired a company to do permanent exclusion to any rat entry areas. We have not experienced any chewed wires in months, and the current remedies are not causing any harm to the many wildlife species that call Marco Island home. We would recommend Good Bites and rat traps with peanut butter to other properties on the island that are having problems with rats as our property at Crescent Beach Condos has had a positive experience with these two solutions."

Nancy Richie:
"Living in southwest Florida means abundant rats, especially if you love palm trees or fruit trees in your landscape. Poison is not the way to control or rid the rats, especially if you want to enjoy birds and wildlife and ensure a healthy environment for you and your community. I have seen firsthand the horrible sickness and death that rodenticide passed onto birds of prey can do, from dead and very sick Burrowing Owls, a dead Barn Owl, and a few very sick Red Shouldered Hawks. Watching a domestic cat struggle to live due to rodenticide will change your mind on rodent control options. Since Brittany/AWE has put the rat infertility bait box in my yard, I have had a decrease in rat sightings and their scat. She checks the box regularly and they are eating up the pellets, so it is doing the job and I know the other birds, wildlife, my pets and family are safe from poison and its awful effects."



Ann Wasserman:
"This is what I see when my pest control service or neighbors use rat poison bait boxes: dead or convulsing rats in my yard or sidewalk, crows or osprey feeding on the carcass in my yard, dead burrowing owls by burrows.
This is what I see when I or my neighbors use rat contraceptive bait boxes: Nothing."
Christine Dowell:
"We didn't really know that we had a rat problem. We used poison bait traps previously, and now we transferred to the new non-poison system and we don't see a difference. We are appreciative there is a non-poison approach to dealing with the rat population in the island. It is safe for the ecosystem and prevents impacts to the food chain."
Sybl Fleming, Court of Palms Condos:
"As a member of the Owl Watch Program, I discussed this proposal with the Court of Palms Condo Association board of directors. We agreed to participate. All owners were emailed with information concerning our involvement in this program. Brittany oversaw the placement of a receptacle which safely housed the pellets. On a set schedule, she refilled the receptacle and recorded the contents. Evidently, our "box" was very popular with the neighborhood rat population: she refilled it often. I understand that this endeavor is not a quick answer to our island being overrun by rats, which, in turn, carry the currently used rat poison to Marco's wildlife that may result in their death and/or neurological damage. I would like to encourage the City Council of Marco Island to consider this new program as an alternative to the present use of rat poison."

Have you spotted these two visiting businesses around Marco Island? Our biologist Brittany and Owl Watch volunteer Ana have now stopped at 40 businesses on Marco Island educating about our 3-step rat prevention process to ensure buildings are sealed, trash is properly managed, and alternatives to rat poison are used. A certificate is provided to businesses that do not use rat poison! Today we would like to highlight the Marco Island Bait & Tackle as an owl friendly, posion free business!

Call Seal Em Out to start the process at 239-722-8243! We can't wait to present more certifications! Help us spread the word to make Marco Island rat poison free! Any pest control companies that want to incorporate sealing buildings and using Good Bites fertility feed can contact us at owlwatchmarco@gmail.com! Wisdom Good Works



A Way to Avoid Rodenticides!

The City of Marco is replacing rat poison with rat fertility feed to help the Island's burrowing owls. Residents, businesses, and condos are encouraged to join the cause to help Marco's most famous wildlife celebrities.

"Good Bites" is an innovative, humane, and sustainable way to control rodent populations without the environmental risks of toxic poisons!

GOOD BITESTM (by WISDOM Good Works) is a non-toxic, plant-based rodent population management product that uses fertility control to reduce rat and mouse populations. Unlike traditional toxic baits, these pellets render rodents infertile, providing a humane, eco-friendly solution shown to reduce populations by up to 70% in pilot studies.

Key Aspects of GOOD BITESTM Rodent Control:

- Method: Uses infertility-inducing ingredients (Thunder God Vine root powder) to curb breeding.
- Non-Toxic: Safe for use around humans, pets, and wildlife, reducing the risk of secondary poisoning to predators like hawks.

- Effectiveness: Proven to reduce rodent populations in urban and field environments (Boston, CT, Southwest US).
- Application: Ideal for integrated pest management (IPM) strategies, usually deployed in bait stations.
- Humane & Sustainable: Acts as a contraceptive, offering a long-term, non-lethal, and sustainable alternative to poison.
- Important Considerations:
- Not an Instant Kill: This is a population management tool rather than an immediate extermination method.
- Best Used with Other Methods: For best results, use alongside sanitation, exclusion (sealing entry points), and habitat modification.

Description: GOOD BITES™ are a rodent population management feed formulated in pellets for ease of use and consumption by the target species, mice or rats. They are foundational to a rodent integrated pest management strategy along with monitoring and exclusion have been shown to achieve population decline in a natural and balanced manner. Without the toxic and lethal effects of rodenticides they are safe for use in and around other animals and humans. In addition to the contraceptive effect responsible for gradual population decline, they are a demonstrated attractant providing the ability of using feeder movement to relocate populations as they naturally decline.



Features and Benefits: The GOOD BITES™ pellets are very appealing to mice and rats and provide excellent nutritional value. The root powder from the Thunder God Vine has been used for millennia by practioners of Traditional Chinese Medicine to alleviate symptoms of rheumatoid arthritis. An additional effect of Thunder God Vine root powder is to induce reversible infertility. In other words, it acts as a contraceptive. The contraceptive action of Thunder God Vine root powder is achieved in mice and rats at less than 0.000001% in GOOD BITES™. At this extremely low level in GOOD BITES™ there are no observable toxic side effects in the target rodents or secondary predator species.

Analysis

Crude protein not less than …… 20.00 %
Crude fat not less than ……....4.5 %
Crude fiber not more than …… .5.5 %
Moisture not more than …… 12.0 %
Ash not more than ……7.0 %

Key ingredient is Thunder God Vine Root Powder.

Ingredients: TwHF powder <0.2% (Thunder God Vine Root Extract, *Tripterygium wilfordii* 20:1 concentration), >99% rice flour, canola oil, bakers' lecithin, corn masa flour, wheat flour, rolled oats, sugar, and whole raw peanut flour.

Feeding Directions

Behavior Background*:*

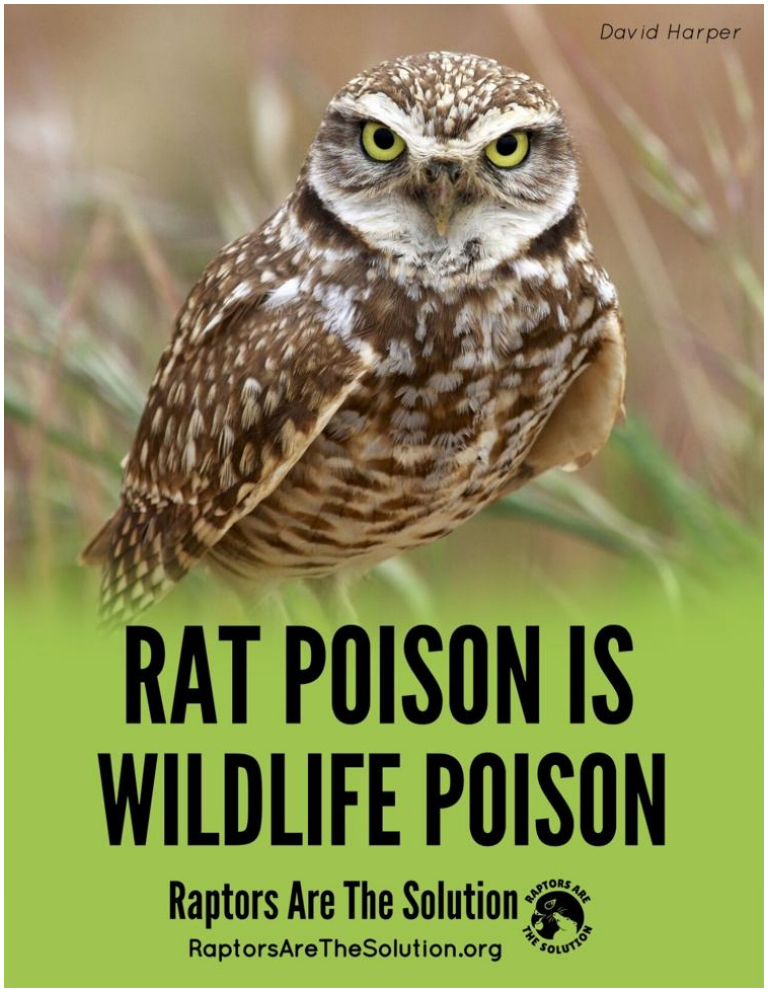
Rats- All rats will eat varying amounts of feed depending on their genetic origin. Larger strains can eat up

to 30 grams per day. Smaller strains will eat up to 15 grams per day.
Mice: Adult mice can eat up to 5 grams of pelleted ration daily. Some of the larger strains may eat as much as 8 grams per day per animal.

GOOD BITES™ contraception is reversible thus to sustain population reduction a maintenance level of pellets should be deployed, check feeders to insure pellet presence. The required maintenance number of pellets depends on the size population on which to maintain control.

Instructions for Use: Check feeders regularly to ensure GoodBites are available in the quantities listed above to satisfy all rodents present. As the population diminishes, the frequency of fills will decline. We suggest weekly checks when first using. A fully filled feeder holds 650grams of Good Bites ™
Shelf life is 1 year at ambient temperatures.

Product Forms Available	***Catalog #***
• Peanut Butter based pellets	PPAPB0100
○Control (non-active) pellets	PPIPB01001
• Whole Peanut fiber pellets	PPAPP0100
○Control (non-active) pellets	PPIPP01001
• Sunflower Butter based pellets	PPASF0100
○Control (non-active) pellets	PPISF01001


David Harper
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