

Rodent control guidelines summary



Rodent infestations are a feature of rural Australia. Commercial poultry sheds and farm structures provide an attractive artificial habitat for rats and mice.

Rodent control is a key requirement of a chicken farm's biosecurity and must be properly considered and implemented to mitigate the following risks:

- rodent-borne diseases
- animal welfare concerns
- feed losses and contamination
- damage to sheds and farm infrastructure.

This fact sheet summarises potential strategies to mitigate the associated risks of rodent infestation.

For more information, including detailed control and management options, download a copy of the [Review of rodent control for the Australian chicken meat and egg industries \(PDF, 2.4MB\)](#) or search the online version [Rodent control on meat chicken farms](#).

Rodent identification

The three main rodent species relevant to poultry operations are the black rat, Norway/brown rat and the house mouse. Correctly identifying the rodent species will allow you to use targeted control strategies and increase your chances of success. You can also implement generic steps to mitigate rodent colonisation if you're unsure which species are a problem.



Figure 1: From left to right: Black rat, brown rat, mouse

Generic control and management strategies

- Minimise the availability of chicken feed to rodents by using secure feed storage, clean up feed spills and remove food scraps and waste.
- Remove anything that could shelter rodents from predators.
- Keep grass and weeds cut short around the edges of sheds to minimise migration.

Rodenticides

Rodenticides are a more precise, effective way to control infestations. They typically contain ingredients described as acute poisons, first-generation anticoagulants and second-generation anticoagulants. Rodenticides come in a variety of forms, including blocks, pelleted and grain bait, liquid bait and tracking powders.

Acute poisons are rarely used and limited to severe infestations. First-generation anticoagulants are chronic in nature and require repeated bait feeding. Second-generation anticoagulants are far more potent, with a single dose being lethal, and therefore are the preferred type of active compound. For examples of each active compound and their respective lethal doses, refer to the comparative toxicity summary table on page 38 of the report or online at [Comparative assessment of commercial rodenticides](#).

Due to the risk of secondary poisoning of non-target species, not all application methods are practical.



Figure 1: Bait stations placed at regular intervals around the outside of a poultry shed.

Bait palatability

Rodents will not voluntarily eat inferior or spoiled food when more enticing options are available. Therefore, manufacturers combine active ingredients with non-hazardous ingredients to make baits more palatable. Rotating different baits may also help palatability, however rotating too often can have the opposite effect with rodents becoming suspicious. Rotating baits with different chemical mode of actions can reduce development of resistance.

Bait types

Block rodenticides are the most used bait on poultry farms. They come in the form of paraffin wax and extruded blocks. These are useful in high moisture areas where other forms of bait would spoil. Baits should be securely tied down within enclosed bait stations. This prevents rodents from removing bait from secure bait stations, minimising the risk of secondary poisoning of non-target animals.

Note: The following bait types should only be used with caution on poultry farms and only when no birds are present.

Liquid bait is generally advised against for internal shed areas. The only time this form of bait might be used is during cleanout to prevent non-target animals from accessing it. Restricting access to natural sources of water can drive rodents to drink liquid rodenticides.

Tracking powders or dusts contain rodenticide and are placed in areas of high rodent activity. Powder sticks to the rodents' fur and paws and is consumed inadvertently during self-grooming. The active concentration is much higher than in consumable bait due to indirect consumption. There are limited safe applications for tracking powders during poultry operations due to the greater risk of secondary poisoning or contamination.

Pelleted and grain baits are unsuitable for poultry operations and are **not recommended for use**. Rodents tend to hoard food and due to its unsecure nature, bait could be scattered in areas where it may become hazardous to non-target animals.

Bait housing

Bait stations manage the availability of the rodenticide, which is vital to ensure it can fulfill its purpose. Bait stations must be placed in safe areas to ensure there are no contamination issues.

- Place in areas with high rodent activity (e.g., between rodent shelter and food supply).
- Do not place on floors where birds have access.
- Place at regular intervals around the outside perimeter of each shed, or range area on free-range farms.
- Place safely in roof cavities, on wall ledges, underneath sheds or other areas where rodents are active.

- Bait stations should be checked frequently with bait intake monitored to provide an indication of the level of rodent activity.
- Bait stations can be increased during periods of high rodent activity.

Traps and glue boards should not be used inside chicken sheds and are most effective in areas with regular rodent activity. Examples include snap traps, wire-mesh cages, funnel cage traps and modified oil drums. They are effective against small populations with the advantage of not relying on hazardous chemicals. Glue boards are only effective against mice as rats can pull themselves off the adhesive.

Safety

Check the material safety data sheets (MSDS) before using any toxic rodenticide. All chemicals must be handled and stored with care and used with the appropriate PPE as required.

Summary

Appropriate use of rodenticides in conjunction with physical management strategies will reduce rodent population and the associated risks to poultry operations.

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More information

Download the full report [Review of rodent control for the Australian chicken meat and egg industries \(PDF, 2.4MB\)](#).

Search the online version of the [Rodent control manual](#).

Download the [rodenticide guide](#) from the Australian Eggs website.

Download related rodent control fact sheets:

- [Know your rodent fact sheet \(PDF, 323KB\)](#)
- [Black rat control fact sheet \(PDF, 259KB\)](#)
- [Brown rat control fact sheet \(PDF, 397KB\)](#)
- [House mouse control fact sheet \(PDF, 523KB\)](#)

Listen to podcasts on the latest rodent control research:

- [Controlling rodents on poultry farms in Australia](#)
- [Novel control options for rodents on poultry farms](#)

Watch the [Lessons from a review of rodent control for the Australian poultry industries](#) presentation on YouTube.

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