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FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

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USE WARFARIN WITH CAUTION, FWS OFFICIAL WARNS

Warfarin—the recently developed rat poison—should be exposed with caution by all persons using it because of the possible danger of accidental poisoning, the Fish and Wildlife Service of the Department of the Interior warned today.

Dorr D. Green, Chief of the Service's Branch of Predator and Rodent Control, stated that "Warfarin can be dangerous to any warm-blooded animal. Although no cases of human illness have been reported to date, we have received a substantial number of reports indicating that pets, particularly house cats, have been made ill or have died from the effects of this chemical."

The Service, says Green, has reason to believe that some of these cases are the result of secondary poisoning, acquired when animals consume warfarin-poisoned rats or mice daily over a period of several days. Accidents have also been reported as a result of domestic animals eating the poison in baits over a prolonged period of time.

To prevent these accidents, the Service recommends that bait materials should be placed only in protected locations and all carcasses of dead rats and mice should be removed promptly. As an added precaution, pets should be excluded from the buildings under treatment.

Warfarin; according to Green, is proving to be one more useful tool for rodent control and in spite of these occasional indications of harmful effects, the Service has found that it is less dangerous than other commonly used rodent poisons, with the possible exception of red squill.

Mr. Green pointed out, however, that the use of Warfarin does not assure miraculous results in permanently eliminating rodent infestations. "Although this new poison is highly effective when properly used," he said, "there is no assurance that all rats and mice on the premises will find or consume sufficient quantities of bait containing warfarin to cause death, nor that they will always accept the type of bait employed. It is obvious, also, that such a slow acting poison which requires several days to kill cannot possibly 'prevent' reinfestations. It will merely kill off new intruders after they have fed on enough of the bait."

In conclusion Mr. Green declared, "Warfarin can be used very effectively in the control of rats and mice but it would be unfortunate if adverse public reaction were to develop as the result of misunderstandings concerning its limitations."

Warfarin is the name that has been adopted for the chemical previously known by its laboratory number, Compound 42. The substance was discovered by research workers at the University of Wisconsin and during the past two years its rodenticidal possibilities have been tested extensively by the Fish and Wildlife Service. It is now available for public use. Small quantities of warfarin must be consumed by the rodents each day for several days to cause death.

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