Rat Control

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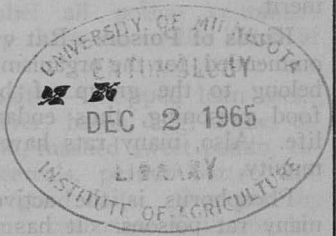

EXTENSION FOLDER NO. 31

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OWING to modern methods of building construction and municipal garbage collection and incineration, rats are not as plentiful in the larger cities as formerly. However, farms in Minnesota often have fifty or more rats to the farm.

Rats require food and shelter. On the average farmstead can be found both food and shelter, hence "rats." The market is flooded with poisons having little or no merit.

Kinds of Poison.—Rat virus is not recommended, for the organisms in this culture belong to the group of bacteria causing food poisoning, thus endangering human life. Also, many rats have a natural immunity.

Phosphorus is the active substance in many rat poisons. It has a distinct taste and odor and is luminous and the rats will learn to avoid it. There is, also, some danger of fire in the use of phosphorus pastes.

Red Squill is an extract of a lily bulb grown near the Mediterranean Sea. The bulbs are pear-shaped, 3 to 6 inches in diameter. Red Squill is relatively harmless to human beings and domestic animals, thereby nearly the ideal rat poison. However, the poison also has its failures, as it has a distinct taste and odor. Rats that do not get enough squill to cause death afterward avoid any bait that contains squill.

Some squills are more toxic than others, owing to the differences in method of manufacture.

Barium carbonate is an odorless and tasteless poison, which when mixed with the bait cannot be detected and is very slow in action, giving the rats time to die in the open, seeking water. The only serious objection to barium carbonate is that it is also poisonous to other animals when taken in sufficient quantities. Human life is endangered by two to three ounces of barium carbonate. Label all poison containers plainly and keep them out of the reach of children.

Attractive baits.—Chopped lean meat, sausage, fish, liver, bacon, egg, apple, tomato, melon rind, mashed sweet potato, banana, cheese, cereals, peanut butter, and sweet corn are good baits. One part by weight of barium carbonate is thoroughly mixed with four parts of any kind of food the rats are not already obtaining in abundance. Rats will balance their own ration. Give them a chance. If the rats do not touch the bait you have placed, change it slightly. Failure to take the bait is not because of the poison it contains, but because the bait does not fit into the rats' balanced ration.

It is the rat's nature to steal and sneak, so the bait will be taken more quickly if it is covered. Covering will also enable you to place the poison bait in yards occupied

by other animals, as the bait will be made inaccessible. The poison bait should be placed under an inverted box, approximately 10″ x 12″ x 10″, with four openings large enough for rats to enter. Over this box should be placed a larger box with a hole cut out on each side. This box will prevent other animals from gaining access to the poison. It should be camouflaged so as to resemble a rubbish heap. The bait should be changed at least once a week.

Fumigation.—Rat runways that are tight enough to confine a gas can be fumigated with calcium cyanide gas. Two companies manufacture this gas, known as Cyanogas and Calcyanide, respectively. This method of control should not be used unless the individual using the gas is familiar with its use and dangers. Consult your county agent for advice on rat control problems.