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# RESPONSE PROCEDURE FOR RATS

Rats are capable of breeding at astounding rates and will quickly reach and maintain the maximum population that can be fed and sheltered in any given area. As there is a very direct correlation between the food and shelter available and the number of rats an area can support, the elimination of these factors is of utmost importance in permanently reducing and eliminating the presence of rats. It is important to keep this in mind when presented with a rat problem in any given area.

Upon notice of a rat sighting on school property, whether it was discovered during a routine service visit or a phoned in report from school personnel, we respond and perform in the following manner.

Due to the dangerous nature of rats, not only as disease vectors, but as a biting hazard, we treat all reports of rats as an emergency situation and respond immediately, usually on the same day we have been apprised of the problem.

Our first step is the inspection of the interior and exterior of the school building and it's property. We seek to identify all areas that may serve as egress areas, areas of harborage, and food or water sources. Evidence that may indicate the presence of rats includes ground burrows, droppings (a rat produces from 40 to 70 daily), rub marks, gnaw marks, and of course actual sightings of rats on or around school property.

If it is determined that a rat is present in an area within the school building, the appropriate treatment is provided and a follow-up visit is scheduled to confirm success of the initial treatment and to provide further treatment as necessary.

When it is determined that rats are present outside the building on school property, toxic baits are placed into the burrows, crumpled paper is stuffed in following the bait, and finally the burrow is crushed or filled in with available material. A follow-up visit is scheduled to confirm success or to re-bait as appropriate.

When rats are reported in the vicinity of a school but no nesting is evident on school property, we attempt to identify the infested property in the surrounding and contact the appropriate agency to provide the necessary cleanup and treatment.

The materials most often used in our treatment of rats are:

1. Large Glue Boards: Thick non-toxic glue provides immediate immobilization of the rat while allowing us to identify any ecto-parasites present which may also necessitate treatment. Glue-boards offer a safe, timely, and thorough remedy.

2: "Contrac" All weather bait blocks: The active ingredient (Bromadiolone) in this single feed moisture proof bait is much less toxic to non-target animals and humans than comparative rodenticides. The wax block formulation is also less likely to be trans-located to an area accessable by children or pets. All rodent baits are either placed in rodent burrows or in tamper proof bait stations.

3: "Protecta L.P." Bait Station: This bait set is used for all bait placements requiring that the bait be placed in "Tamper-Proof" station to prevent accessibility by children or non-target species. This station uses a unique "key" to unlock the station and incorporates a horizontal bait securing rod which keeps the bait dry, palatable, and makes removing the bait without the key highly improbable.

4: "Ditrac" Tracking Powder: While we stock tracking powder, our use of it is very limited due to its toxicity. All tracking powders are "Restricted" pesticides due to their high toxicity and ability to drift from the application area. Furthermore, the USEPA registered label states they may only be used outdoors "only in rat burrows along the periphery of buildings and only if they are likely to serve as egress into the building". Indoors, it may not be used where there is even a possibility that it may be tracked into food areas or child accessible locations. Tracking powder should only be used when because of a persistent and unavoidable alternative food supply, rats will not feed on the less toxic rodenticide baits. When its use is indicated, extreme caution must be exercised to avoid wind drift and the possibility that it may be tracked into sensitive areas through the rats' foraging activities. It is preferable to remove, isolate, or containerize the available food supply contributing to the rodent problem.

5: We incorporate a number of closure materials including ¼ inch hardware cloth, copper mesh, and adhesives used to seal and close rodent access points.

6: Among the most important tools for controlling rodents is our rodent inspection sheet upon which we recommend steps that the school staff may take to permanently alter the environment to render it less conducive to rat habitation. We find custodians and school staff eager to facilitate the alterations recommended by our certified staff. Closure and structure modification provides long-term control and reduces the need for toxic baits.