



# OEFFA Organic Certification Fact Sheet

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## Rodent Control

### Preventing and Eradicating Rodents and Other Pests in Storage and Processing Facilities

**R**odents can cause serious problems for organic producers. The damage resulting from rodent infestations is not limited to structural damage to buildings. Rodents can damage perennial fruit plantings; they can transmit animal diseases from farm to farm (e.g. foot and mouth disease) and can pose a serious food safety risk if their feces come in contact with produce or packaging materials. As most rodenticides are prohibited synthetic substances under the rules, producers and processors should be aware of the options they have for controlling rodents and other pests in storage areas and processing facilities.

#### NOP Citation

See § 205.271 for facility pest management standards and Subpart G for The National List of Allowed and Prohibited Substances.

#### Overview

Pest control for organic producers and handlers is a multi-tiered system. First, producers must use management practices to prevent problems before they happen. These include preventing access to facilities and organic products, removal of harborage, food sources and breeding areas by maintaining clean production, processing, and storage areas. When prevention is not enough, mechanical or physical means may be employed, although rodent snap traps may not be used in the production area of a processing facility.

If problems persist, nonsynthetic materials and synthetic materials on the national list may be used. Placement and containment of these substances must be such that contact with certified products, land, or livestock is not possible. OEFFA allows the use of bait boxes outside the facility, if there is no risk of contaminating the organic product. If the practices provided for above are not effective to prevent or control pests, a synthetic substance not on the National List may be used, provided that the certified entity and OEFFA agree on the substance, method of application, and measures to be taken to prevent contamination of certified products. All of this should be documented as a part of the OSP and audit trail. Contact the office if you need to pursue this option.

#### Prevention

Rodent-proofing buildings and eliminating food sources around the site are the most important prevention strategies. Stacks of straw or hay around buildings can provide burrowing and nesting material and should be removed. Vegetation that abuts a building can provide cover to rodents as they travel in and out. To deter them, remove vegetation from around buildings to 6 foot radius and replace it with gravel.

Bird boxes can be used to attract predators (e.g. kestrels, barn owls). In areas with dense rodent populations, barn owls will live in close proximity without becoming territorial. Birds of prey, cats and some dog breeds will help control rodent populations, however there is not conclusive evidence that predators *alone* can effectively eliminate rodent populations. Some rodent predators may also pose a risk to poultry.

Ultrasound devices are permitted for organic producers, however, their effectiveness is not proven and the high frequency sound waves might disturb livestock.

#### Dealing with Infestation

Live traps, glue traps, snap traps, and a few poisonous bait products are approved rodent control measures. Traps are moderately effective at eliminating rodents. They are expensive to maintain due to time spent monitoring and resetting. Trapping may be preferential to poisonous bait for livestock producers to minimize risk of contaminating feed or of a dying rodent being consumed by a pig, poultry, pets or a wild predator. Some traps contain bait and do not allow rodents to leave after they have been lured in. These are advantageous in an organic system, as effective baits may be used with no danger of contamination.



Vitamin D3, cholecalciferol, is a synthetic substance allowed for use as a rodenticide as long as the pest prevention and mechanical control options are in place. Producers interested in using rodenticide bait with Vitamin D3 as the active ingredient should contact the OEFFA Office to be sure the particular product is approved.

When you begin a baiting or trapping program, do not disturb the rodent habitat initially, otherwise they will be encouraged to move to a different area before they have a chance to feed on the bait or activate the traps. Rodents will only feed on bait if they don't have access to their preferred food. There are different shapes of bait pellets that are available, including blocks, pellets and seeds, each designed to mimic a particular rodent's preferred food. Different populations have different feeding preferences, so begin by using all available bait shapes. Baits cannot be placed inside facilities or where there is a risk of contaminating organic products.