

## Dear Certification Specialist...



*I am having some issues with rodents. I would like to use some rodenticides on my certified organic farm, and I am wondering if this is in compliance with the NOP rule?*

*Sincerely,*

*Gophers in the Greenhouse*

Dear "Gophers,"

Pest Management on a certified organic farm should take a multi-step approach:

- Level A - Prevention/avoidance of the problem is the required first line of defense
- Level B – Use of mechanical and physical controls may be used when level A methods are not enough
- Level C – If level A and B controls have failed, an approved material may be used
- Level D – If control actions A, B and C are not enough to control pests, level D practices may be used. Level D practices include the use of insecticides and rodenticides not on the National List.

**Level A:** Rodents like to take up residence close to food sources and nesting grounds. Buildings, feed bins, wood piles, junk heaps, and stacked trash are all highly attractive to rodents. Level A methods should be your first line of defense. Prevent rodents from coming to your farm by removing possible habitats, and keeping rodents away from food sources. Physical barriers to food, such as fences, wire baskets, or even trenches and irrigation can be effective.

**Level B:** The reality is that prevention can only do so much, and many organic farmers rely on trapping for some degree of control. Use of mechanical and physical controls, such as snap traps or electronic traps, may be used when level A methods are not enough. Trapping can be very effective when used with persistence, skill, and the right kind of trap (there are many kinds on

the market). Selection of attractive bait is also important. Rodents go for fish, oatmeal, bacon and sweets. Select a trap location inaccessible to children, livestock, pets and non-target species. Good old fashioned predation is one of the best ways to control rodent populations. Development of habitat for natural enemies of pests, or a good barn cat, also fits this category.

**Level C:** When Levels A and B have failed, materials on the National List may be used. Natural materials, in general, are allowed. A few, however, such as arsenic and strychnine, are prohibited. Synthetic materials are generally prohibited, with Vitamin D3 as an exception. Vitamin D3 -containing rodenticides produce hypercalcemia, making it an effective poison. Rodents generally die within two days following ingestion and do not appear to exhibit bait shyness. However, care should be used when placing this bait, particularly where dogs and cats are present, both of which may eat it as well. Agrid3 and Terad3 are examples of Vitamin D3 - containing rodenticides that are on the OMRI list. When you have to resort to the use of approved products, you must keep pest control records.

Level D methods may only be used if Levels A, B and C are not enough to control pests. Level D practices include the use of insecticides and rodenticides not on the National List. All materials and methods must be approved by MCS before use, and a protocol must be written to prevent contamination of organic product.

*If you have a question that you would like to see answered in the "Dear Certification Specialist" column, send an email to [certification@mofga.org](mailto:certification@mofga.org).*

