

# Orange County Mosquito and Vector Control District

## New Policy for Rat Service Requests

### June 18, 2015

#### NEW POLICY STATEMENT

As of June 18, 2015, the Orange County Mosquito and Vector Control District (OCMVCD) has modified its rat baiting policy and procedure. Rodenticide filled tubes containing Contrac® block bait (0.005% bromadiolone, a.i., an anticoagulant) will no longer be used for occasional sightings of roof rats, *Rattus rattus*. Emphasis will continue to be placed on public education by promoting environmental management solutions.

Repeated use of rodenticides or “re-baiting” to temporally reduce the population of roof rats has proven to be ineffective and a threat to the environment by direct and secondary poisoning of non-target animals. Most of OCMVCD’s rat service requests stem from occasional sightings of roof rats and not serious infestations. Roof rats are commensal rodents that thrive in conditions that humans create. Therefore, homeowner awareness and participation in habitat reduction and/or elimination is the only effective long-term method for rodent control.

Recent more restrictive environmental regulations that govern the use of anti-coagulant rodenticides have also influenced this policy change to suspend routine baiting as a means of reducing roof rats. Growing concerns and evidence showing secondary poisoning of wildlife, increased regulatory restrictions, and our steadfast commitment to sound integrated vector management (IVM) practices have warranted this policy change.

OCMVCD Inspectors will continue to respond to roof rat service requests to identify conditions that attract and maintain roof rat populations on residential properties, with a focus on home rodent exclusion, elimination of attractive food sources and harborage.

For more information on the recent changes to rodenticide regulations and effects of secondary poisoning of wildlife, please refer to the following links:

US Environmental Protection Agency: <http://www2.epa.gov/rodenticides>

National Pesticide Information Center: <http://npic.orst.edu/envir/protwild.html>

California Department of Fish and Wildlife: <https://www.wildlife.ca.gov/living-with-wildlife/rodenticides>

## **Policy**

The Orange County Mosquito and Vector Control District (OCMVCD) shall respond to all regulations mandating rodenticide placement. The use of rodenticides will remain available for roof rat reduction only when OCMVCD determines that conditions are serious enough that population reduction is warranted. Examples include conditions that create a significant environmental disturbance driving rat populations out to seek refuge in surrounding neighborhoods or due to evidence of disease risks. Bait placement will only be considered appropriate under the following conditions:

1. Pre-construction habitat removal, i.e. Caltrans work, development projects, etc.
2. Home hoarding cases, pre clean-up
3. Large-scale landscape projects
4. Extreme circumstances observed by a public health professional
5. Confirmed presence of a rodent-borne disease

# **Orange County Mosquito and Vector Control District Standard Operation Procedures (SOP) for Rodenticide Placement**

## Rodenticide Placement

- In conjunction with an inspection, tamper-proof bait stations may be placed at occupied residential properties. Signed liability form will be submitted to a supervisor for review.
- Bait stations shall be placed in accordance with established IVM principles.
- A release of liability form must be signed by the occupant of the property.
- The Inspector shall apprise the occupant of all associated risks involving rodenticide placement.
- At the discretion of the Inspector, an appropriate amount of bait station(s) shall be placed.
- Bait stations are to be firmly wired to a fence or stout vegetation approximately 6 feet above the ground.
- Bait stations are not to be placed more than 50 feet from the primary structure on the property unless authorized circumstances permit.
- Bait will be removed at a pre-determined time.

## Sensitive Habitat Concerns

- Non-rodenticide means of roof rat control are to be emphasized to the occupant
- Rodenticide placement on properties adjacent to sensitive habitat is subject for review.
- Bait station(s) shall be placed directly adjacent to the primary structure, away from the fence line which abuts sensitive habitat.

## Proper Handling of Used Bait Stations

- Inspectors shall wear nitrile gloves and eye protection when handling used bait stations.
- If an inhalation hazard is present, a N95 respirator must be worn.
- The interior of the used bait station is to be sprayed with aerosol disinfectant before being handled.
- Used bait stations are to be placed in a large trash bag which is then placed in a lidded plastic container prior to transporting.
- Upon returning to the District, used bait stations are to be placed in the disinfecting tank.
- Clean and disinfect all storage containers, as necessary.
- Wash hands upon removing gloves.

- Change into a clean uniform or street clothes at the end of the day.

## **Procedure to Public Response**

### Front Desk – Incoming Telephone Call Management

1. Develop dialog to “soften the impact” for the chronic bait requester. (Example; “Due to regulatory restrictions, our rat baiting policy has changed. Your area inspector can discuss other effective options with you.”)
2. Develop dialog to manage dissatisfied callers. (Refer to area supervisor)
3. Invite callers to visit website for full policy.

### Inspector Incoming Telephone Call Management

1. See above 1-3
2. Discuss the importance of an inspection, (property safety).
3. Discuss environmental impact of rodenticides.
4. Stress that OCMVCD is focused on reducing the cause of rodent sightings and provide manageable solutions.

### Property Inspections

1. Each call will be unique and the Inspector’s attitude and response to the public will determine the outcome.
2. At no time should “that’s our policy” be used as the sole reason for no longer baiting. Carefully explain OCMVCD policy and provide factual information and alternative solutions other than baiting.
3. Clarify that OCMVCD is not a pest control company and does not provide poison bait.(for new rat calls only)
  - a. Provide a thorough property inspection.
  - b. Provide factual information regarding roof rats; misconceptions, myths and cause and effect.
  - c. Provide literature.
  - d. Discuss environmental impact when rodenticide bait is used. Reference studies for rodenticide effect on other animal populations, i.e.; raptors, scavengers, other food chain.
  - e. Discuss the possibility of domestic animal poisoning.
  - f. Reference the OCMVCD’s PEIR for rodenticide use reduction requirements.

- g. Identify causes and discuss the logic for environmental modifications for long term control.
  - h. Discuss the reality as to where homes/properties may be located, i.e. adjacent to rural areas, lush and dense landscaping etc...
  - i. Discuss the advantages of trapping rats. (OCMVCD may provide trap stations to secure snap traps, TBD)
  - j. Refer to the policy available on OCMVCD website.
4. It will take practice to develop a professional and effective delivery of the policy.