

Gerwyn Jones, Asia Pacific manager at PelGar International, recently asked his fellow pest control colleagues what rodent is causing them the most concern – the answer was mice



// The job is getting a lot more complex //

Pest controllers tell me that they would rather tackle a black rat (*Rattus rattus*) infestation than a mouse one. This intrigued me and thought it would be useful to dig a little further and see why mice are becoming more prevalent.

There were a few common themes that stood out from my investigation, one of them were sites with abundance of different food sources, properties operating 24/7 and the reluctance by the client to have traps/bait stations on the shop floor. This was, of course, supermarkets.



Global challenges facing mice control

A quick internet search will reveal many cases around the world where mice have gotten out of control within supermarkets and with social media have been reported very quickly and made national news.

There was an incident at a major supermarket in New Zealand a few years ago that dominated the media channels at the time. It was discovered that baby food pouches on the supermarket shelves had small puncture marks in them.

Initially, it was thought that this was done intentionally, and the NZ Police were involved. Further infestation revealed that this was mice damage.

A full nationwide product recall of three baby food brands was carried out by the supermarket chain at a considerable cost, not only in monetary terms but to the reputation of the brand of the manufacturer and the supermarket.

The supermarket chain and its main distribution centre had pest control programmes in place, but something went drastically wrong.

This is an example of the challenges we face as pest controllers to keep our clients pest-free but due to many variables the job is getting a lot more complex.

There has been a move globally to reduce the amount of toxins that we are able to use on certain sites, and in some cases even the external bait stations can only have a non-toxic block or some form of kill trap.





In Australia, a supermarket chain will not allow break back traps within any of its stores.

As an industry we are seeing our pest control toolbox being raided, and more and more of our tools for mice control are being taken away from us.

WHAT DO WE DO?

We really need to adapt and understand what we are looking to control and the parameters that have been given to us by the client, and in some part get back to basics. What this means is not to think that just by placing a couple of mouse stations down with some bait that you are going to get control.

Take some quality time looking for the usual signs and coming up with a plan, which involves several different control and restriction methods.

Understanding your client is very important and could bring in extra revenue. With the UK exporting more and more goods into global markets, your customer may be looking to enter these territories, which means they will have to comply with the standards imposed by their end customer, such as YUM or AIB etc.etc.

Such compliance and extra reporting will require more time and, therefore, more revenue for pest controllers.

KEEPING UP-TO-DATE

Keeping your finger on the pulse of what is happening in the industry and what new products

Think outside the box when thinking what lure to use



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are coming through for mice control.

This sector has really started to improve with many manufacturers introducing new stations/traps and what is most interesting is the introduction of new rodent lures.

There is a train of thought that mice with their natural curiosity habits will enter a trap/station just to have a look, more recently this is not the case and as pest controllers we need to entice them in.

Several years ago, the only lure that I could recall was Provoke from Bell Laboratories – this space is really starting to open up now with different matrixes and smells. My advice would be to give them a go and see which one suits you best, plus understand what you are targeting.

At PelGar we have several different bait flavours depending on which country we are going into – we even have an amaretto one!

Think outside the box when thinking what lure to use, especially if there is an abundance of food, maybe look at putting nesting material such as cotton wool on the trap. There was a lone mouse on a Conservation Estate in New Zealand that eluded capture for quite some time, they were

eventually caught using the litter from the mouse cage at the local pet shop as an attractant.

If you are going to clean your traps make sure that you only lightly brush them and oil the springs with either linseed oil or beeswax, you want to make sure you keep the pheromones intact to entice more rodents on to them.

When placing your traps, many of the rodent stations now come equipped with tabs at the back to securely hold the rear of the traps in place. This seemingly insignificant feature plays a crucial role.

When a trap is triggered and its rear is firmly anchored to the floor, it results in the transfer of greater kinetic energy into the unit, leading to a more efficient and successful kill compared to an unsecured trap.

In closing, one little gem I would like to share with you is a relatively unknown scientific paper that was published in 2017 by M. Frankova, V. Stejskal & R. Aulicky: *Suppression of food intake by house mouse (Mus musculus) following the ingestion of brodifacoum-based rodenticide bait.*

In essence, the paper shows that once mice had started to consume a rodent bait which contained brodifacoum then their appetite was suppressed to such an extent that at the point of 100% mortality overall mean food consumption was 75% lower than mice which had not consumed the brodifacoum bait. 

