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## D-Con rat poisons targeted by EPA

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The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency moved Wednesday to ban the sale of 12 mouse and rat poisons produced by the maker of D-Con products because regulators say the manufacturer refuses to adopt the agency's safety standards to prevent the poisonings of children and deaths of non-targeted animals.

The decision gives Reckitt Benckiser Inc. 30 days to challenge the proposed ban on its rat-and-mouse-killing products, which contain lethal compounds, known as second-generation anticoagulants, that interfere with blood clotting, resulting in uncontrollable bleeding and a slow, agonizing death.

Nearly 10,000 children a year are accidentally exposed to mouse and rat poisons, according to the EPA. The poisons have been linked to the deaths of hawks, owls, foxes, mountain lions and other predators that capture poisoned rodents or scavenge their contaminated carcasses, officials said.

EPA regulators said they spent five years working with rodenticide producers to improve safety, and while some companies did make improvements, Reckitt Benckiser refused to adopt the agency's standards.

"For five years, the makers of D-Con have thumbed their nose at EPA, refusing to adopt even the most basic protections for children and wildlife," said Greg Loarie, attorney for Earthjustice. "Their utter disregard for the law and public welfare - the sheer corporate greed - is staggering."

The EPA requires such poisons sold to residential consumers to be contained in "protective tamper-resistant bait stations and prohibits pellets and other bait forms that cannot be secured in bait stations."

"Moving forward to ban these products will prevent completely avoidable risks to children," said James Jones, acting assistant administrator for the EPA's office of chemical safety and pollution prevention. "With this action, EPA is ensuring that the products on the market are both safe and effective for consumers."

No children have been exposed to rodenticide poison from companies that have complied with the new standards, according to the EPA.

The proposed ban comes a little more than a month after a coalition of environmental and public health groups represented by Earthjustice urged the California Department of Pesticide Regulation to reject 2013 registration renewals for the second-generation anticoagulants.

The EPA order would target consumer products for home use that do not contain tamper-resistant packaging, but most of the worst anticoagulants would still be available.

"I'm very relieved the EPA has taken this significant step to protect our families from accidental poisonings," said Jonathan Evans, toxics and endangered species campaign director for the Center for Biological Diversity. "But other steps are needed. Wildlife, too, need protection from these cruel, indiscriminate and deadly toxins. It's time we get them out of the wild."

Recent studies by UC researchers found second-generation anticoagulants in 70 percent of the mammals and 68 percent of the birds that were examined. Another study found rodenticide contamination in 75 percent of the Pacific fishers that were tested, Evans said.

Fish and Game biologists have documented poisonings in raptors and several mammals, including the endangered San Joaquin kit fox.

Mountain lions and bobcats in the Santa Monica Mountains in Southern California have died from poisoning, according to biologists with the National Park Service.

A study analyzing owls found dead in British Columbia and the Yukon Territory showed that nearly three-quarters of the birds had rodenticides in their livers.

The pesticide issue is huge in the Bay Area, where an estimated 10 million pounds of pesticides are used every year, much of it in rodenticides. A disproportionate number of the children under age 6 who are accidentally exposed to rat poisons nationwide each year are from low-income families, state and federal pesticide regulators have said.

If Reckitt Benckiser challenges the EPA cancellation notice and an administrative law judge upholds the decision, the company could take the matter to federal court, a process that could delay the proposed ban for many months.

Company officials couldn't be reached for comment.