



Ridding Toxic Killers

by Heidi Walters / Fri, Mar 21, 2014

On Tuesday, California passed a regulation restricting retail sales of certain rat poisons, such as d-Con. Soon, only licensed, certified or county permitted application professionals will be able to use them. The restrictions don't go into effect until July 1. But by Friday morning, at least one local retailer already was sweeping those products from its shelves.

Pierson Building Center's garden shop manager, Lydia Rieman, said she has known for at least a year that the restriction was coming and hasn't been carrying any backstock on d-Con anyway. What limited supplies her shop had were pulled off the shelves today.

"And we'll no longer special order it for people," she said.

Other stores in the area that carry d-Con include Walgreens, Walmart and Shafer's Ace Hardware, and at least as of today they were still selling it. Down in Southern Humboldt, stores voluntarily quit selling such rat poisons last year after the Humboldt County Board of Supervisors passed a resolution asking county retailers to stop carrying the stuff.

The restriction covers any rat poisons containing brodifacoum, bromadiolone, difenacoum and difethialone. They're called second-

generation anticoagulant rodenticides, and though d-Con's the most prevalent brand of these products, there are many others. Animals that ingest these poisons — not just the targeted rats and mice, but also pets and wildlife — can bleed to death either from a cut or from internal hemorrhaging. And they can be poisoned even if they don't directly eat the poison.

"While one dose kills, it takes several days and the pest will continue to eat the rodenticide, building up the amount of that remains in their body tissue," said Charlotte Fadipe, with the state Department of Pesticide Regulation. "When wildlife such as a coyote, barn owl or endangered San Joaquin Kit fox, or a family pet, eats the poisoned pest, they end up being poisoned as well."

The use of these rodenticides on illegal marijuana farms has caused particular alarm, especially here in Humboldt County. According to a National Public Radio report, they're responsible for "nearly a third of the deaths of male fishers in recent years" on the Hoopa Valley reservation. And it was brodifacoum that killed a Blue Lake man's dog in February. That death the Humboldt County Sheriff's Office is investigating: Red meat laced with brodifacoum was found in the dog's system — possibly revenge against the dog's owner, who is a researcher studying how the use of these poisons on pot farms affects wildlife.

"The volume of rodenticides will be dramatically reduced," said Jonathan Evans, with the Center for Biological Diversity, about the new restrictions. The Center has raised its reward for information on the Blue Lake dog killing from \$2,500 to \$20,000.

However, he said, people can still sidestep the law by bringing the stuff in from out of state. And, he fears a likely challenge from the makers of d-Con, whose legal challenge has delayed implementation of a similar federal restriction from going into effect.