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## Pesticide maker agrees to phase out controversial poison

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Highly toxic rodent poisons that created a regulatory furor after they spread into the environment and were linked to the death of wildlife will be taken off store shelves, according to an agreement between the manufacturer and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency.

Reckitt Benckiser Inc. announced Friday it will discontinue 12 mouse and rat poison products sold under the d-CON brand. The company agreed to cease production of the rodent baits containing what are called second-generation anticoagulants by the end of the year and cease distribution by March of next year.

"We wanted these things to be gone yesterday, but the fact that their days are numbered is fantastic news," said Greg Loarie, the attorney for Earthjustice, which has been pushing for a ban. "We have fought for years to get rid of them and now we are finally seeing the end of the line."

The d-CON rodenticides have been the subject of lawsuits and numerous regulatory actions by the EPA and the California Department of Pesticide Regulation. Environmental and wildlife conservation

groups are vehemently opposed to the use of second-generation anticoagulants, which interfere with blood clotting to cause uncontrollable bleeding and death.

Before controls were tightened, nearly 10,000 children a year were accidentally exposed to mouse and rat poisons, according to the EPA. The products 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.

"Millions of households use mouse and rat poison products each year," said Jim Jones, the assistant administrator for EPA's Office of Chemical Safety and Pollution Prevention. "Canceling these products will help prevent risks to children, pets and wildlife."

The EPA moved last year to ban the poisons on grounds that the manufacturer refused to adopt the agency's safety standards to prevent poisonings of children and deaths of non-targeted animals.

Reckitt Benckiser fought the proposed ban and filed a legal challenge to the state Department of Pesticide Regula-

tion, which also tried to regulate the rodent-killing products. Under pressure from all sides, the company changed its tune Friday, announcing that the anticoagulants will be replaced with a new line of approved rodenticide baits in 2015.

“Protecting the public health has always been the primary concern for our business,” said Hal Ambuter, the director of regulatory and government affairs for d-CON, in a written statement. “We are committed to providing effective and affordable products to consumers to control rodents that can invade homes, spread diseases and damage food and property. We believe that the agreement announced today enables us to continue to achieve these objectives.”

An estimated 10 million pounds of pesticides are used every year in the Bay Area, 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.

“This is a significant victory for environmental protection and corporate responsibility,” said Jonathan Evans, toxics and endangered species campaign director at the Center for Biological Diversity. “While the fight isn’t over until all of these hazardous products are off the market, this decision keeps the worst of the worst products from residential consumers.”