

No More Moldy Bait

By Ted Bruesch • Contributor

Wet and humid weather can wreak havoc on even the best-conceived rodent management programs. Tough weather conditions can make rodenticides less effective and unattractive to rodents, and moldy bait can give customers the wrong impression about service quality.

Wet and humid conditions can be a problem for any type of bait formulation, however, the discussion of moldy bait usually involves block baits because blocks are best suited for situations where weather and wet, damp conditions are an issue. Bait blocks can be secured in tamper-resistant bait stations or inaccessible places, and they typically tolerate warmth and humidity better than other formulations, such as meal, seeds, pellets, tracking powder and liquids.

Most block rodenticides rely on wax to shield them from humidity and water, and slow down the formation of mold. But even wax blocks can get moldy over time: Dampness eventually allows mold to form on the blocks' surfaces. Moisture also seeps in through microscopic openings in the wax coatings, causing food ingredients to swell, and creating bigger openings — hastening spoiling.



Bait block selection can help with mold prevention.

bait blocks also incorporate attractants to ensure palatability. Some block formulations have their ingredients milled to fine textures and compacted to increase hardness and durability, and minimize the amount of crumbs scattered outside stations by feeding rodents — which some regulators view as “bait outside tamper-resistant stations.”

Besides choosing mold-resistant, durable blocks, there are several other techniques pest management professionals (PMPs) should take to minimize the effects of rain and humidity on bait blocks:

1. Elevate stations that are not on well-drained gravel or pavement by 1 inch or more. Use patio blocks to keep them off damp ground and out of puddles. Rodents can easily climb up to get into the entry holes.
2. Position stations away from downspouts and other sources of heavy water flow.
3. Use stations with drainage holes in the bottom of their bait compartments.
4. Use vertical rods with block supports at the bases, or horizontal rods, to keep blocks off stations' floors. If the stations do not have block supports, place 3/8-inch nuts over the rods under the blocks.
5. Maintain an ample supply of fresh bait — ensure the rodents have enough to eat.
6. Replace bait blocks that are even a little moldy or rancid because you don't know how long it will be before they'll become unpalatable to the rodents.
7. Replace bait blocks contaminated with chemicals — such as cleaning solutions splashed on them, oil vapors in the air or pesticides sprayed around the stations. Rodents can taste such contaminants at less than 1 part per million. Make sure your hands are free of chemical residues such as gasoline, cologne, scented soap and pesticides, when handling bait.
8. Replace bait when it has been in an outdoor station two months or in an indoor station three months. These time-frames can be extended one month when using advanced bait blocks with preservatives preventing mold growth. **PC**

ON GUARD AGAINST MOISTURE

Where there's moisture, there's the potential for mold — and when bait blocks gets too moldy or rancid, rodents will not feed on them. Additionally, third-party auditors view moldy and rancid bait as an indication the rodent management program is inadequate. They deduct points from inspection scores, which can result in lost business. Competitors also can use moldy bait to convince prospects they are getting poor service and should switch to them.

Moldy and mushy blocks also complicate bait station cleaning. The goey messes have to be scraped out, which is an unpleasant task that cuts into productivity and profits.

BREAKING THE MOLD

Putting an end to mold problems is simply a matter of selecting the right bait block and incorporating best practices.

The newest innovation in block formulations is the addition of preservatives to inhibit the growth of mold, such as those found in Liphatech's BlueMax Mini Blocks. Advanced

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