

Rodent control basics for poultrymen

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NEWARK, Del. — The poultry industry has made great strides in improving weight gains, feed efficiency, egg production and disease control. Yet, with all the modern technology, it still has a nagging problem—rodent control. Infestation of poultry houses with rats and mice remains a common and serious industry problem.

Statistics regarding the effects of rats and mice on poultry production are mindboggling. Here are a few of the figures. One pair of rats will eat more than 50 pounds of chicken feed in a year, besides wasting and contaminating many times that amount. Rats average six litters on nine each year, but some litters contain up to 20 young. Rats can kill hundreds of baby chicks in a single night and have been known to injure or kill older birds. Rats and mice can carry up to 18 different kinds of lice, fleas and mites which transmit many diseases affecting both humans and domestic animals. Fowl cholera is one of these diseases which concerns poultry producers.

Rodents also damage equip-

ment, insulation, foundation, walls and electrical wiring. Heavy infestations can be very destructive. According to one estimate I've seen, nearly \$1 billion worth of property is destroyed each year by rodents in the U.S.

Considering the fact that effective rodenticides have been available for over two decades and methods of rodent prevention in poultry houses are frequently reported, how can all this happen?

There seem to be two main reasons: indifference on the part of some producers, and the ability of rodents to adapt, survive and reproduce under adverse conditions. Remember, when you see one or two rats it's a good bet 10 times that many are actually in residence.

Our newest poultry structures are not immune to rodents. Broiler breeder house construction actually tends to favor infestations. For example, a typical broiler house with slats over two thirds of the floor area offers good shelter for rats. They will burrow in the manure and the dirt, eat and drink directly from feeders and waterers, and take advantage of feed and water spills through the slats.

Rats and mice also damage insulation by burrowing and nesting in the walls and ceilings of poultry houses. Once established they remain relatively hidden and can quickly increase in numbers.

If you know a poultry house is infested with rats and mice, act quickly to reduce their numbers or eliminate them. Traps and baits, laced with approved poisons, can be effective if strategically placed. The impact of anticoagulant baits and other compounds such as zinc phosphide will depend on rodent acceptability. When poultry are present in the building, such baits must compete with readily available chicken feed and water and so must be at least equally palatable. Bait-shy rodents will ignore baits not normally available to them as chicken feed.

Remember that rodenticides are poisons. If mishandled, these poisons can injure poultry, livestock—or the applicator. So read directions carefully and follow them to the letter. You must have a private applicator's license when using restricted rodenticides like zinc phosphide.

Here are some rodent control basics to keep in mind:

Eliminate piles of trash, machinery or wood near poultry and livestock buildings and other places likely to harbor rats. This certainly includes eliminating potential shelters near your house as well. Constantly clean up around the farm to deny comfortable quarters for rats and mice.

Keep buildings as ratproof as possible by eliminating access. Use metal flashings on wooden doors. Make sure doors fit tightly and use fine mesh wire screening on windows and other possible entrances.

Place baits in burrows, runs,

attics and other rodent-traveled areas.

Consider keeping a cat; cats can provide excellent mouse and rat control.

If your own efforts are unsuccessful and rodent populations are high, call in a professional exterminator.

With the arrival of cooler weather, rats and mice have begun moving indoors for shelter. They will prefer chicken houses and other livestock buildings where feed and water are readily available.

Prevent potential losses by taking prompt action now to control these destructive critters.

Eastern Nat'l prepares for big week

TIMONIUM, MD. — The Eastern National Livestock Show scheduled from October 3 through 6 is shaping up to be one of the best ever according to Wayne A. Cawley, Jr., Maryland Secretary of Agriculture. Over 1,145 animals are already entered in the event which takes place each year at the

Maryland State Fairgrounds in Timonium.

The more than 500 animals entered in the breed classes include Angus, Polled Herefords, Herefords, Charolais, Shorthorns, Chianina, Limousin and Simmental.

Market class entries include 90 market steers, 85 junior heifers, 50 market lambs, 50 4-H market hogs, 25 open market hogs, 95 junior breeding sheep, 55 feeder steers and 250 open breeding sheep.

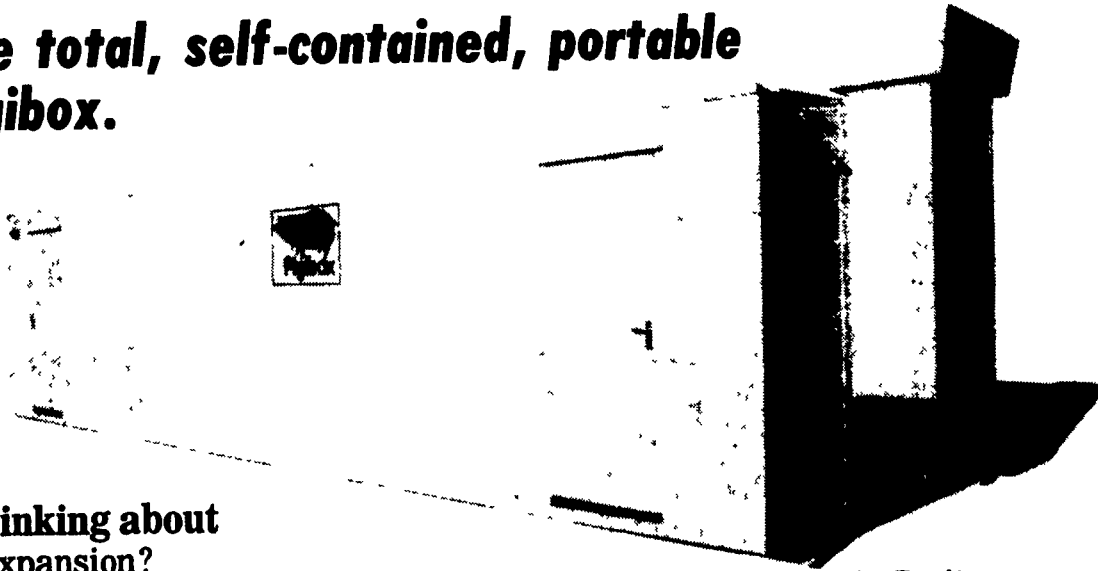
"The Eastern National is the highlight event of the year for livestock breeders east of the Mississippi," says Cawley. This year the show has a new manager, Mr. Kenneth (Ken) Shifflet. Ken recently retired after 28 years of service with the Cooperative Extension Service of the University of Maryland.

Additional information and a show schedule of events can be obtained by writing to the Eastern National, Maryland State Fairgrounds, Timonium, Maryland 21093 or by calling (301) 252-3555.

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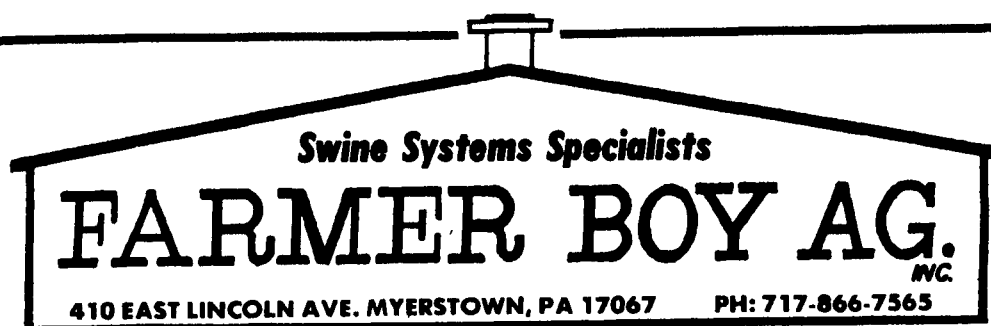
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