

Rats Ain't Just Rats

Rat Management Hints

INNISFAIL BABINDA CANE
PRODUCTIVITY SERVICES

Climbing rats have caused obvious damage on many Innisfail and Babinda cane farms this season.

Ground Rats cause less obvious damage low on the cane plant but are an equally important pest.

Both of these rats are native grassland species, each requiring a slightly different approach in their management.

This pamphlet by Innisfail Babinda Cane Productivity Services (IBCPS) promotes two different approaches in terms of timing and the use of rodenticides.

The only baits that growers may use are **RATTOFF®**, **Racumin®** and a new product on the market **ZP Rat Bait®**.

ALL baiting needs to be recorded and reported to either IBCPS, Canegrowers organisation or directly onto the Mackay Area Productivity Services website – **PREFERABLY TO JOSH AT IBCPS – give us a call and we will help.**

IBCPS **DO NOT** support the use of rodenticides not registered for use in sugarcane. This is illegal and failure to comply with our district level blanket permit will result in the permit being revoked – simple.

Rat control is only achieved with an Integrated Pest Management (IPM) approach. Knocking down rat populations before they reach full breeding potential involves:

1. HARBOURAGE MANAGEMENT (from mid-harvest to the full onset of the wet season)

Harbourage is where rats retreat to after harvest and then reinvade for the next season. Ground Rats that don't leave the crop will remain in their burrows under trash. Climbing rats will move to harbourage adjoining canefields. Reduce grasses in harbourage, especially from mid-harvest on to deprive rats of food &/or shelter during the most vulnerable time of their life cycle.

2. IN-CROP WEED CONTROL

*Depriving rats of their protein source (**weed and grass seeds**) greatly reduces their breeding success.*

3. MONITORING

*Look for signs of rat presence within cane (**active burrows, ratoons with dead hearts, stalks bitten off in young ratoons, cane billets chewed and dragged to burrows, little tracks in the trash blanket**). Regular visual assessment is important. Breakback traps set 3 times (at 1 - 2 month intervals) provide additional information on rat numbers and their movement.*

4. STRATEGIC BAITING

RATTOFF®, Racumin® and ZP Rat Bait® work well against both species of rat. Research shows no advantage from baiting in the harvest season, instead:

Ground Rats (November to February)

- *Detect where rats are active by monitoring*
- *Place RATTOFF® or Racumin® in a grid pattern in cane*
- *Apply Racumin® in bait stations in harbourage*

Climbing Rats (November to June)

- *Apply Racumin® in bait stations in harbourage*
- *Perimeter bait with RATTOFF® or Racumin® 5 metres within cane where rat damage is expected until end April.*

The Australian Pesticides and Veterinary Medicines Authority (APVMA) has approved an **industry aerial baiting permit** for the control **Australian Ground Rats** in **lodged sugarcane**.

The permit is an extension of a previous aerial baiting permit that was limited to use in the Mackay and Herbert growing regions and is valid until 31/03/2022. Growers baiting for rats under the conditions of the permit must contact IBCPS to receive approval before any aerial baiting can occur on farm.

