



U. S. Department of Agriculture
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FREEING IDAHO OF GROUND SQUIRRELS.

N Washington, D. C. By combating ground squirrels
E Idaho farmers saved over \$1,250,000 -- in crops during 1918. Twenty-
W two counties and 4,025 farmers cooperated with the Biological Survey of
S the United States Department of Agriculture in stamping out the squir-
rel pest, and as a result 277,751 acres were cleared of the rodents.

S It is estimated that this ground squirrel eradication work in
U Idaho saved at least 5 per cent of the total crops of that State which
M formerly went to pay the yearly rodent tribute. As one farmer phrases
M it, "I used to consider that the squirrels had a mortgage on 25 per
A cent of my crops as they devoured one-fourth of all I produced. Now
R after I have cleared my farm of squirrels, I harvest and save 100 per
Y cent of all the crops I grow."

(Editors:- The additional details below are for publications
desiring more particulars.)

In Bonneville County, Idaho, 114 farmers distributed 6,223 pounds of
poisoned oats over 11,871 acres, and as a direct and immediate result saved
\$41,265 worth of farm crops which otherwise would have been consumed by the
squirrels. In the eradication campaign, one farmer in this county distributed
poisoned bait over one of his fields and less than one hour later when he re-
turned to the field he counted 278 dead ground squirrels, 6 rabbits, and 10
rock chucks which had fallen prey to the deadly bait.

Idaho farmers formerly used strychnine sulphate prepared in a variety
of ways to poison ground squirrels, but because this material proved un-
satisfactory, the use of powdered strychnine (alkaloid) is now practiced
in the organized campaigns. This poison acts very rapidly through the mouth
~~and cheek pouches instead of through the stomach.~~ It is prepared by mixing
1 tablespoonful of gloss starch in $\frac{1}{2}$ teacup of cold water and then stirring
this combination into $\frac{1}{2}$ pint of boiling water to make a thin clear paste.

Organize Agriculture For Its Big Job in 1919.

Then 1 ounce of powdered strychnine (alkaloid) is mixed with 1 ounce of baking soda in a little water and stirred with the starch into a smooth, creamy mass, free of lumps. Then $\frac{1}{4}$ pint of heavy corn sirup, 1 tablespoonful of glycerine and one scant teaspoonful of saccharin dissolved in a little warm water are stirred together. This solution is spread over 12 quarts of oats and mixed thoroughly in order to coat each kernel. One quart of this poison is sufficient for 40 to 60 baits. The material -- scattered one teaspoonful to a place -- should be distributed along the clean, hard surfaces near the squirrel holes where it will not endanger live stock and where there is no chance for the rodents to waste the material by tramping over it or by covering it with refuse from their holes, as would occur were the bait to be placed directly in their burrows.

The saccharin and corn sirup are used to make the bait palatable, while the baking soda retards solution of the strychnine and thus aids the saccharin in hiding its bitter taste. The starch cements the poison evenly over the oat or barley grains and the glycerine prevents the poison from drying and dusting off the grain. Oats or barley are used because the ground squirrels for whom the bait is intended are particularly fond of these grains. This bait is much better than the strychnine sulphate poison formerly used, because it is more effective and can be stored in quantity for comparatively long periods without deterioration.

Columbian ground squirrels are not controlled by this method of eradication, as they hull oats very carefully before eating them and hence avoid the poison. Therefore a special method of preparing bait for these squirrels is used so that as they hull the oats the poison flakes off in the rodents' mouths and kills them. The Columbian ground squirrel infests the wooded sections of Idaho north of Boise and Bellevue; it has longer ears and tail and is of larger size than the ordinary ground squirrel. It also has an obscure brown-colored streak along the middle of its back, while the hind portions of its hips and thighs are a bright, brownish-red color.

The Columbian squirrel bait is prepared by combining in dry mixture, one ounce of powdered strychnine (alkaloid) and one ounce of baking soda, one teaspoonful of saccharin and three tablespoonfuls of flour, adding a little cold water and stirring thoroughly to a smooth, creamy paste. This mixture is distributed uniformly over 12 quarts of oats as in the former case, and the poison bait scattered as previously described. This poison should be used

within ten to fourteen days after preparation, as otherwise the material will dust off the grain. If the poison wastes too freely, the grain may be placed in a tub or other vessel, sprinkled with a little water, and mixed to moisten it before distribution.

Poison ground squirrels as early in the spring as possible, say the Federal specialists, as in this way the natural increase of young squirrels is eliminated. The poisoning campaign should be continued throughout the year until the section is free of these pests. The rodents will eat the poison baits at any time. Attention should be given to destroying the squirrels in all their haunts in pastures, uncultivated fields, fence rows, and roads as well as from the cultivated fields where complete extermination of the pests is sought.

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