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FEWER RATS IN LARGE CITIES
SAYS NEW U. S. PUBLICATION

Twenty years ago there was one rat for every person in almost all the large cities. Today it is estimated there is not more than one rat to each two persons in such cities, says the U. S. Department of Agriculture, in a new circular "The House Rat". In small towns, however, the number of rats is estimated equal to the human population and on farms the ratio is much greater.

There are fewer rats in large cities because of improved sanitary conditions, modern rat-proof construction, fewer horses, improved food packages and fewer waste food products.

Prepared by James Silver, of the U. S. Bureau of Biological Survey, the circular points out that because of the normally abundant food supply and many rat harbors, there are few rat-free farms. In some of the control campaigns several hundreds, and even thousands of rats, have been taken from farms. Some years ago the contestants in a rat-killing campaign in one county in Texas turned in 153,720 rat tails in 6 weeks. The human population of the county was only 35,000.

Rat control in the smaller agricultural towns is usually more difficult than in large cities because proportionately less concrete is used than in cities and facilities for disposing of garbage and trash often are lacking.

NOTE TO EDITORS:

Further information on rats follows:

Both species of the house rat, the brown and black, immigrated from Europe on ships. As the black rat is the common ship rat it is quite likely it was introduced at the time ships first moored on American shores. It is now found chiefly at seaports and in the Gulf States. The brown rat is reported to have made its first appearance in the United States about the beginning of the American Revolution--in 1775. From various seaports it gradually spread inland, driving out the smaller black rat, until now it is common in every State.

Today it is estimated there are 123,000,000 rats in the United States--almost as many rats as persons. Half the total is estimated to be on farms; 34,000,000 on nonfarm country residences and in towns with less than 10,000 population, and 29,000,000 in cities of 10,000 or more. The circular says rats cause an estimated annual loss of \$189,000,000. Of this sum, \$63,000,000 is lost on farms, an average of \$10 per farm; \$68,000,000 in small towns and on nonfarm residences, and \$58,000,000 in large cities.

Rats carry bacteria and parasites and a number of their own diseases are transmissible to man and domestic animals. In addition, they contract and spread some human and livestock diseases.

Poison bait prepared with red squill is primarily recommended for control, not only because it kills the animals but because it is relatively harmless to humans and domestic animals. Rat killing should be followed by elimination of their harbors and the rat proofing of buildings.

Detailed instructions for preparing and distributing red-squill baits and for gassing, trapping, and otherwise suppressing rats are given in Farmers' Bulletin 1533, "Rat Control". Methods of shutting rats out of buildings and premises are described in Farmers' Bulletin 1638, "Rat Proofing Buildings and Premises." Copies of these publications and of the new Circular No. 423, "The House Rat", may be obtained at 5 cents each from the Superintendent of Documents at Washington, D. C.