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PMPs in Spain turn to Bell's bromadiolone block bait to halt devastating vole plague

Some 750 pest control technicians in Spain, along with local farmers, applied tons of Bell Laboratories' bait in one of Spain's prime agricultural regions, in a desperate attempt to control a population explosion of voles that was destroying crops.

Starting in February, technicians from *La Junta de Castilla y Leon*, the local government agency responsible for pest control in the affected region of Castilla-Leon, applied pail after pail of Bell's bromadiolone bait blocks to hundreds of thousands of hectares hoping to stave off further destruction of crops by the devouring voles.

"Given the seriousness of the problem, in some cases, the bait was distributed directly to farmers so they could apply it themselves,"

noted Xavier Calbet, agricultural rodenticides and specialty products manager for Bell's distributor in Spain, Comercial Quimica Masso.

The 5-gram bait, sold under the *Latigo Bloques* label in Spain, was small enough so technicians could apply it by tube into the entrance of vole holes without crouching. With a sweep of their foot, they could close the hole to prevent birds or rabbits from eating the bait, and then move quickly to the next hole.

No Time To Waste

Vole problems are nothing new in Spain but this latest plague had become so severe that *La Junta*, working with Calbet and Bell representative, Agostino Panetta, had more than 80 tons of bait air freighted to Spain to control the voles before they destroyed the country's vineyards and winter crops.

In a record-breaking two-week period, Bell manufactured and shipped 63 pallets containing 7,000 10-kg pails of bait to help save the region's farming economy.

"For the moment, the results of baiting are good. The voles are dying," Calbet reported in May. "According to *La Junta*, the problem is decreasing."

Voies Out of Control

Voies are native to Spain. These small rodents, once confined to the Pyrenees, found the arid central plain more hospitable in recent years when the traditional dry farming shifted



Tons of Bell's 5-gram bromadiolone bait blocks were needed to halt a vole plague in Spain's agricultural Castilla-Leon region.

to irrigated cultivation. The region's bitter winters would kill off most voles, keeping populations in check. If winters were mild, however, they would spike.

This recent vole plague, Calbet noted, may have been the culmination of climatic factors, politics, and food availability. An unseasonably mild winter, followed by an abundance of spring rain, led to a population explosion in 2006.

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What's New

- Bell's bromadiolone bait offers relief to Spanish farmers plagued by voles
- Canada's Maheu&Maheu celebrates 75 years in the industry
- RPM posters now available in Italian and Dutch
- CRRU and Sparsholt College in the U.K. collaborate on educational DVD addressing rural rodent control
- Pursell joins Bell's marketing dept. as product manager

Maheu & Maheu

celebrates 75 years

Befitting a company founded on a dance hall powder that also killed cockroaches, Michel Maheu kicked off Maheu&Maheu's 75th anniversary celebration in late April by sprinkling dancing powder from an old hand duster onto the dance floor of the restored Imperial Theater in historic Quebec City.

With that, some 300 guests, including Maheu family members, company employees and spouses, and a host of customers and suppliers took to the floor and enjoyed what Maheu described as "a huge family party, an evening without stories," a French Canadian expression meaning everything went well.

Even the band, aptly named Knockout, fit the evening's theme.

The celebration marked a milestone for the Canadian pest management company whose origins date back to 1917 in Montreal when Rose-Anna Maheu, Michel Maheu's great grandmother, and her brother Aimé discovered that the powder sprinkled on dance floors to make dancers glide also killed the scourge of the time, cockroaches. The entrepreneurial pair bought the rights to the powder and sold it as "Mysterious Roach Powder."

In 1933, at Rose-Anna's suggestion, her son, Horace, opened a similar business in Quebec City, calling it Maheu&Maheu Co. Though he was alone, the double Maheu gave the company name "a certain gravitas." A savvy businessman and trained exterminator, Horace Maheu soon convinced his customers to let him apply the insecticide, launching the service aspect of the business.

When Horace suffered a heart attack in 1957, his son Paul, took over the company, building relationships within the pest control industry in Canada and the United States.

In the early '70s, after Paul Maheu met with Bell Laboratories' owner, Malcolm Stack, Maheu&Maheu became Bell's first distributor in Canada. Bell has maintained its long-standing relationship with Maheu&Maheu and its vice president of international sales, John Schwerin, represented Bell at the celebration.

Celebration Coupled with Awards

Acting as emcee for the evening, former General Manager André Maheu, Paul's younger brother who joined the company in 1970 and developed its technician team struc-



THE 75-YEAR HISTORY
OF MAHEU&MAHEU IS
CHRONICLED IN AN
ATTRACTIVE BOOKLET
COMMEMORATING THE
PEOPLE DRIVEN BY
A SHARED PASSION.



Rose-Anna Maheu

Launched a business on dancing powder that killed roaches



Horace Maheu

Rose-Anna's son who grew the family business in Quebec City



Paul Maheu

In 1957, Horace's son, Paul, took over as head of the business until '91



André Maheu

Joined his older brother, Paul, in the company from 1970-2002



Michel Maheu

Paul's son has been guiding Maheu&Maheu since 1982



Louis-Philippe Maheu

André's second son joined the business in 1999 as controller

In 1933, following the lead of his brothers in Montreal, Oscar and Henri Maheu, Horace Maheu opened a store in Quebec City to sell Mysterious Roach Powder.

ture, thrilled the guests with company stories and acknowledged the many employees who helped bring Maheu&Maheu to its current status as one of Canada's three largest pest management companies.

Whether employee or family member, everyone at Maheu&Maheu is eligible to benefit from company growth. Today, 90 percent of eligible employees are Maheu&Maheu shareholders, alongside family members.

To keep the party light on speeches, the company held its annual awards ceremony earlier in the day, saving three awards for the evening program, including the coveted Horace Award for Technician of the Year which was presented to Sylvain Paradis for his outstanding job in production, quality and sales.

"You have your Emmys and Oscars," Michel mused. "We have our Horace award."

The widow of Serge Boutin, who worked with André Maheu and ran the company's first regional office in Rimouski in 1971, presented scholarships to three recipients. And, the Branch of the Year award went to the Quebec/Chaudière-Appalaches office.

Going Green Back in 1989

Since joining the family business in 1982 as its first technical director, Michel Maheu, Paul's son and now General Manager, has seen the company expand into the agricultural sector which represents 35 percent of revenues.

Under his direction, the company also implemented environmentally friendly practices, long before they were government mandated. "Going green" at Maheu&Maheu was pioneered before the term was coined through the 1989 launch of its PMP (Promoting Minimum Pesticides) Ratio program.

With steady growth, Louis-Philippe and Michel Maheu look forward to the 100-year mark and, along the way, they hope to increase the company's presence in the industry.

"We are currently on the acquisition channel with short- and mid-term growth going west into Ontario, looking for companies that would fit with our model," Michel added. On June 11, Maheu&Maheu acquired the pest management division of Veolia Environmental Services, formerly its sister company, Mysto.

In the meantime, the company is gearing up for a second celebration over Labor Day weekend when the Maheu family, along with all employees and their families, will spend the holiday at a resort in Petite-Rivière-St. François, an hour's drive east of Quebec. ■

RPM posters now in Italian and Dutch



Bell's Rodent Pest Management (RPM) posters are now printed in Italian and Dutch, adding to English, German and French versions already available to Pest Management Professionals throughout Europe.

Illustrated with colorful photos and concise text, the 46cm x 61cm posters highlight the key elements of rodent control: inspection, harborage reduction and rodent proofing, as well as choosing the right bait for knockdown or elimination/prevention. Bell baits, sold in the respective countries, are featured, along with the 6 key principles to successful baiting.

The poster also includes photos of Bell's various mechanical traps and bait stations illustrating non-toxic control techniques. It is an attractive addition to any product showroom, training classroom or display booth.

Besides the posters, PMPs can obtain a companion 16-page Rodent Pest Management booklet with basic scientific information on rodent control, along with tips and practical advice gleaned from Bell's field staff.

Posters and booklets are available through Bell distributors or from Bell's European office in Sudbury, England at emea@belllabs.com or by calling +44 (0) 1787 379295. ■

DVD on rural rodent control

Students at agricultural colleges in the United Kingdom can learn the best ways to control rats and mice in rural areas, thanks to a new training course entitled "Rodents, Agriculture and Wildlife Management in the U.K."

Created by the Campaign for Responsible Rodenticide Use (CRRU), in conjunction with Sparsholt College, one of the leading agricultural colleges in the U.K., the course addresses five key areas of rodent control in rural settings:

1. Why Control Rodents
2. Rodent Species
3. How to Control Rodents on Farms
4. Environmental Impact of Rodenticides
5. The Campaign for Responsible Rodenticide Use

The training program is part of on-going initiatives by CRRU to promote responsible use of rodenticides in rural settings. CRRU was formed in 2004 when seven rodenticide manufacturers and distributors, including Bell, met to address concerns from UK legislators about wildlife and environmental exposure to rodenticides used in rural areas.

"We take these concerns seriously," said Rupert Broome, Bell's Business Manager for Europe, the Middle East, Africa & Asia. "Through these training materials, we hope to improve the knowledge of young farmers so they will adopt the best practices when undertaking rodent control on their farms and in rural communities."

The CRRU expects other agricultural colleges within the Land-Based Colleges National Consortium (LBCNC) will adopt the training modules as part of their curriculum. They plan to make it available to pest control operators working in rural areas, also.

The five modules in DVD-format are 'locked' Power Point slides, with accompanying notes for the lecturer and a reference list. Details are available from Bell or by visiting the CRRU website at www.thinkwildlife.co.uk ■



Suzy Pursell joins Bell in sales and marketing

Suzy Pursell, a recent graduate of the University of Wisconsin-Madison Graduate School of Business, joined Bell Laboratories' marketing department in May as a product manager where she provides direct marketing support for Bell's domestic and international product lines.

She works with relevant departments at Bell headquarters, as well as its sales managers in Canada, Europe and Australia, to ensure efficient entry and support of new and existing Bell rodent control products in the marketplace.

In that capacity, Pursell is involved with product registration, package development, advertising planning and development, and product stewardship.

Pursell brings both a Master of Business Administration (MBA) degree and years of experience to her new position. From 2000-2004, she worked for ORBIS/Menasha Corp. in Oconomowoc, Wis., as a product manager, marketing a line of products for the food, retail and pharmaceutical industries.

In 2004, she joined the University of Wisconsin-Madison School of Business where she spent two years as the assistant director of MBA marketing and recruiting. While in graduate school, Pursell was an MBA intern for cardiac rhythm management marketing for Boston Scientific Corp. in St. Paul, Minn.

Pursell is based at Bell headquarters in Madison, Wis. ■



Suzy Pursell

Devastating Vole Plague

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Vole numbers reached plague proportions by August 2007. Farmers watched helplessly as hundreds of millions of voles devoured a bumper alfalfa crop. When voles had eaten the last tender green alfalfa shoots, they turned their appetites to sugar beets, potatoes and the vineyards. Angry farmers put pressure on officials to return to the use of rodenticides, threatening to release live captured voles in their offices unless something was done.

The government of Castille-Leon responded by agreeing to controlled burning of harvested fields but even that did not help.

By February 2008, *La Junta* officials, working with Masso and several other companies, put their order into motion.

Some Control At Last

"Now the infestation is beginning to be under control, thanks to the large quantities of rodenticides which have been applied," Calbet reported. "Also the population of voles was so high that it reached a level where it couldn't sustain its own subsistence.

"It's still early to talk about the damage that the plague caused because it has not yet been eradicated, but losses could be 50 million euros with some 350,000 hectares affected," Calbet added. "We don't know the number of voles that may have died, but it is estimated at the moment that there were more than 600 million at the peak population throughout Castille and Leon."

With summer coming, Calbet predicted that it is unlikely there will be another episode as important as this past one.

"The Junta of Castille and Leon is working from their experiences from 2006, so they are better organized, better prepared than in the summer of 2006. It is possible that it can grow aggressively in four years, as it is a chronic problem that has appeared historically."

For now, at least, he added, "It seems that the applications of early spring have managed to start controlling the pest." ■

Contact Bell or your local distributor for details of rodenticides registered in specific countries. Use pesticides safely. Always read the label. Follow the BPCA Code of Practice for glue boards in the UK.

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