

Control Operators and Non-Government Organizations stay attentive.

Lastly, farmers are also encouraged to use rodenticides. No matter the rodenticide chosen, PCOs and farmers are encouraged to follow the bait's label.

While mice usually infest the country's coastal areas, they are reportedly infesting cities in the Queensland territory, which is farther north than typical. So far, the mice, in these northern towns, have primarily destroyed cars and contaminated water troughs. Area farmers are still apprehensive to proclaim 2023 a resounding success after the trauma of the 2021 plague, which resulted in a reported billion-dollar

loss in crops.

These intense and costly mouse plagues occur when abundant food sources are present and droughts, wildfires as well as climate & agricultural change reduce the population of natural predators to mice. Unless humans are able to learn to adapt to these issues, more disease and destruction from mouse plagues will prevail. A New York Times article describing the last mouse plague in Australia tells the reality of what that could mean: "In addition to devouring crops, they've bitten people in their beds, dropped out of air-conditioning units and gnawed through appliances. They've eaten the toes off chickens in their



Mice plagues occur at least once a decade

pens. They've been blamed as whole towns have lost phone reception and a house has burned down."

Let's all hope that the rest of 2023 in Australia does not repeat the severity of plagues past. ■



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DID YOU KNOW?

A rat's bite force has been measured at 41,370,000 Pascals while a human's bite force is just over 1,103,000 Pascals.

Source: <https://www.pestexinc.com/blog/2021/september/the-scary-truth-about-rodents-teethPSI>

PCOs Offer Australians Hope Amidst Mice Plagues



Mouse plagues are a problem for Australian farmers

Ever since British ships carried on-boarded mice to the Australian colony, mice plagues are a common problem for Australian farmers. On average, mouse plagues occur at least once a decade, according to Curtin University Associate Professor Bill Bateman. Unfortunately, due to changes to climate and agricultural practices, these plagues are expected to occur more frequently. Per a BBC report, "Land is much more intensively used these

days as farming methods have improved. Sowing machines are now so accurate that they can plant seed far more precisely - within a few millimetres, in between last year's stalks - so the previous season's old growth doesn't even need to be cleared away." To deal with these demanding circumstances, farmers are relying on a combination of old and new resources like mouse-proof construction materials, digital tools, rodenticides and collaboration between different interest groups.

and farmers, along with more attention globally have led to an increased acceptance of prevention methods like using mouse-proof construction materials for silos, homes, barns, and outbuildings in mouse-rich areas. This protects crops, humans, and pets from damage and disease.

Additionally, digital resources like Mouse Alert (website and mobile app), provide helpful resources, track mouse activity, and publish bimonthly reports about the current and project mouse activity around the country. The organization's most recent published report encourages farmers to stay vigilant and to "continue to monitor their paddocks and use mouse chew cards." Users can access the app without having access to the internet. They are asked to submit any spotted activity so that reports and maps remain accurate. Mice outbreaks can pop up quickly so leveraging streamlined technology help farmers and outside organizations like Pest

Based off projected wheat yields, experts warned that the 2023 mouse plague might be as bad as the recent widespread mouse plague of 2021. So far it appears that this year's wheat crop has been left largely unscathed. Recent collaborations between scientists, businesses,



The 2021 mouse plague caused widespread destruction

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PROTECTING GARDENS FROM RODENTS



Rodents can cause havoc in gardens
Source: iStock Photo

In the summertime, gardens are the focal point of a client's home or business. Unfortunately, gardens lend themselves to destructive infestations from rodents like mice, rats, voles, squirrels that can turn gardens into an eyesore. The plethora of food, shelter, and water make it the ideal place for rodents to burrow and reproduce. Removing or limiting the accessibility of these vital resources can deter rodents from setting up a home. Staying ahead of infestations in these areas is imperative, as rodent populations can grow quickly amidst abundant vegetation.

Keeping rodents out of the garden helps reduce the spread of harmful diseases to plants, humans, and pets. If left to their own devices, rodents can severely damage homes, sheds, fences, and landscapes. During inspections of homes, business, or municipal areas with gardens, eliminate food and water sources and harborage areas.

GENERAL TIPS

- Reduce brush or other harborage, Educate customers about the importance of keeping gardens neat and tidy by reducing brush and other harborage zones. This includes keeping the lawn mowed, hedges trimmed, and sheds and outbuildings cleaned. Decks and patios also need to be kept tidy since rodents may use them for shelter.
- Rodents are also constantly in search of accessible and abundant resources like food and water. Bird houses and bird baths are popular targets for rodents since they contain easily accessi-

ble resources such as bird seed and water. As a result, bird seed should be cleared from the ground and properly sealed in a rodent-proof container when it is being stored. Encourage clients to lessen or eliminate bird seed entirely from their garden, if possible.

- Customers should be advised to dump bird baths as soon as they fill up with rainwater. Clients should also be wary of letting their pet drink from a bird bath too since rodents can contaminate the bath's water.
- Be on the lookout for bite marks or loosened vegetables. Rodents usually frequent the same places until resources are removed or shielded so just seeing a few vegetables on the ground is not enough to cause concern, but a recent pile-up is worth further investigation.
- Additionally, since gardens require water, it can be tempting to keep a constant stream of water going from sprinklers and hoses to the garden and landscaped areas. This is inviting to rodents and clients should be aware of the problems posed by their garden hose. A small water source may be just enough to make wandering rodents want to stay.

Community Gardens

Community gardens are becoming increasingly common in urban areas. They, like a home garden, add a bit of natural beauty to a neighborhood. And just like a home garden, it is vital to keep community gardens tidy and neat since community gardens may border multiple homes or businesses.

Signs of a rodent infestation in a garden include:

- Burrows
- Runway lines in grass, mulch, or dirt-covered areas
- Droppings
- Gnaw marks on sheds, fences, and plants
- Shredded paper
- Odor

Rodents can access nearby homes while also accessing the plentiful resources provided by the nearby garden. As rodents expand their litter, they may seek out other places to burrow, making nearby homes or businesses a target.

Burrow Builders

Burrowing rodents like voles can quickly turn a garden from a beautiful landscape into a blemish.

Voles can quickly damage a landscape or garden with their runways. Their burrows zig and zag across the yard creating persistent pathways. Voles will also damage and injure plants by chewing on their roots. ■

EMEA: Spotlight on Shyam Lakhani

Shyam Lakhani, Bell's Central, Northern and Eastern European Sales Manager, has been to Iceland and Poland over the past several months, where he presented to distributors and pest control operators on the benefits of using iQ® products, which gathers rodent activity via Bluetooth® sensors.

During his trip to Iceland, Lakhani met with two distributors, who have been dedicated Bell partners over the years. Both distributors came away impressed at the technology and innovation of the different iQ® products.

"They feel that this could be a great addition to the Icelandic market as they do not have any remote monitoring systems in place," said Lakhani.

While in Poland, Lakhani attended ConEX, which is the largest exhibition hosted by the Polish Pest Control Association. It draws in pest control operators from surrounding countries, including Ukraine, Romania, and the Czech Republic. Lakhani mentioned that two Poland-based distributors were already

receiving questions from interested PCOs about all the ways iQ® could positively impact their businesses.

In addition, the Polish Pest Control industry and association were so impressed with Bell's range of iQ® products that they presented Bell with an award for product innovation. The decision was made by an independent panel of judges and there were many products on display within the show.

"I spoke to several different providers who are all saying that the industry is now really moving forward and pushing for further quality and innovation," said Lakhani.

Lakhani is excited about all the bubbling interest in iQ across Europe. He looks forward to capitalizing on this interest by meeting with the local distributors and developing strategies to bring this technology to these markets. ■



Attendees at ConEx Pest World / Source: Shyam Lakhani



Shyam Lakhani at Bell's ConEx Pest Booth / Source: Shyam Lakhani

Del Valle Honored by CS3D



Arnaud Del Valle, EMEA Business Manager, of Bell Laboratories was recently named representative of the Manufacturers College of CS3D. CS3D's

purpose, as explained through the organization's website, "is to foster sustainable and responsible corporate behaviour and to anchor human rights and environmental considerations in companies' operations and corporate governance."

Del Valle, summarizing his thoughts on what he wants to do in this new position and what he loves about working in

pest control industry, explained his "main mission is to be the voice of the industry workers of his profession."

Working alongside service providers to meet their needs via technical solutions, Del Valle is passionate about research and development, to ensure pest control operators have access to the most innovative and effective solutions. ■