

ANIMAL PEST CONTROL

ANIMAL PEST

Use of Fumigants to Control Rabbits

Introduction

Fumigants are poisons used to kill rabbits in their burrows. They produce toxic fumes, which are inhaled by the rabbits causing death. The main advantage with using fumigants is that the operator does not have to rely on the rabbit eating poison bait. It is also a very effective method of controlling young rabbits, which do not wander far from their burrows and so are normally difficult to poison and shoot.



Typical rabbit warren

Fumigation is a labour-intensive control method and is best used in conjunction with methods such as night shooting or as a follow-up method after poisoning.

Suitable fumigants for rabbit control

Recommended for general use is Magtoxin which produces phosphine gas. Other fumigants include:

- Chloropicrin (also known as Larvicide)
- Cyanogas (no longer available but some people may still have supplies).



Suitable fumigants - Larvicide, Magtoxin, Cyanogas

Before using any fumigant or poison:

- Read the poison container label
- Comply with all handling instructions
- Understand symptoms of poisoning and the recommended first aid treatment

Equipment Needed

- Fumigant
- Spade or grubber
- Protective clothing i.e. overalls, rubber gloves
- Respirator may be required when using some fumigants

How to Fumigate a Rabbit Burrow

Fumigation can be used to control rabbits in two ways:

- To kill rabbits that are seen to run down a particular burrow; or
- Block fumigation i.e. the fumigation of burrows that are encountered while systematically searching paddocks.

When carrying out block fumigation, it is a good idea to use a dog to hunt the area first. This helps to drive rabbits into cover underground. It is essential that the dog is under good control and is restrained before you begin fumigating.

If you are dealing with only occasional rabbit burrows, check the surrounding area for other possible entrances once a burrow is discovered. Burrows often have more than one opening.

Using a spade or grubber, cut back the opening of the burrow so you have easy access to the burrow. Then cut a sod of earth large enough to completely block the entrance and place it within reach of the entrance.

As you prepare to apply the fumigant to the burrow, ensure that you are positioned so that any escaping fumes are blown away from you by the wind rather than toward you. Take the correct amount of fumigant from the container and immediately close the container. Place the fumigant at least 30-40cm into the burrow.



Applying Magtoxin pellets to a rabbit burrow - ensure you are standing upwind so any escaping fumes are blown away from you.



Burrow sealed with a sod of earth grass side down

Immediately seal the burrow by placing the sod of earth grass side down (this prevents loose soil from falling onto the fumigant and burying it) into the entrance and stamping it in to make the burrow as air tight as possible. Then back fill the entrance area of the burrow and try to level the ground off to remove as much of the entrance as possible.



End result- burrow well sealed and backfilled

Systematically fumigate all burrow entrances found.

If you are using Magtoxin in very dry conditions, it is advisable to place it in the burrow on top of a piece of damp paper or cloth. This will speed the generation of phosphine gas.

If a burrow is discovered that is obviously not in use (cobwebs in the entrance are good indicators of this) there is no point in applying fumigant. However, ensure you properly block these burrows to prevent rabbits from using them in the future.

Disposal

Contact Hawke's Bay Regional Council for advice on the disposal of unwanted fumigant.

Acknowledgements

Photos and information supplied by Environment Bay of Plenty.

For further information

For further information on animal pests or the Regional Pest Management Strategy, please contact the Biosecurity Animal Pest Officers at the Hawke's Bay Regional Council.

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