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“Wildlife Aware” Course and Accreditation

Background Information

The “Wildlife Aware” training course is provided by the Campaign for Responsible Rodenticide Use (CRRU) in collaboration with BASIS. The course is NOT a course on basic rodent control. Those who attend the course are expected already to possess proficiency through practical experience and prior training in rodent pest management, and to have obtained relevant qualifications such as those offered by the Royal Society of the Protection of Health (RSPH) and City & Guilds, or equivalents.

The use of rodenticides is essential to many rural enterprises. Rodenticide use is important in the maintenance of good husbandry and the protection of human and animal health and for the prevention of spoilage of foodstuffs due to contamination by rodent pests. The use of rodenticides is increasing, both because there is evidence that rodent populations are themselves increasing and because many agricultural audit schemes now insist on structured rodent pest management procedures in all facilities audited under the scheme.

However, there is growing evidence of widespread contamination of wildlife with anticoagulant rodenticides. Many of the species involved are of high conservation status, such as the barn owl, kestrel and red kite. The effects of the low-level residues commonly found are unknown, though there is currently no evidence that these residues are having an adverse effect on any populations of wildlife. Nevertheless, these residues are worrying, are unwanted and are largely unnecessary if fundamental guidelines are followed during the application of rodenticides in the countryside.

The “Wildlife Aware” course will explore these apparently conflicting requirements. The course will increase understanding of current levels of contamination of wildlife to rodenticides, explain the main primary and secondary routes of exposure of wildlife to rodenticides and alert competent professionals to the techniques that should be adopted to minimise wildlife exposure during rodent pest management in rural settings. This advice is based in the code of practice for the responsible use of rodenticides known as the CRRU Code (<http://www.thinkwildlife.org.uk>).

Who should attend the course?

The course is primarily aimed at those who offer a service of rodent pest management to farming enterprises and other businesses in rural areas. In particular, professional pest controllers and the employees of local authorities involved in pest control will find the course, and the accompanying accreditation scheme, advantageous in their activities.

The course is also relevant to those involved in game-rearing and who carry out rodent pest control as a part of such activities. Farm contractors and farm employees who conduct rodent pest management as a routine part of their duties will also benefit from the course. Those who attend the course should have already attended training courses in rodent pest management so that they are fully competent in the use of anticoagulant rodenticides.

While not the main target audience for the course, those involved in wildlife conservation may find the course useful towards familiarisation with rodent pest management techniques and best practice in avoiding unwanted wildlife impacts.

Accreditation

“Wildlife Aware” accreditation is offered to all those who attend the course and pass the examination. This accreditation is designed for professional pest controllers, local authorities, game-rearing enterprises and other businesses offering a commercial service of rodent pest management in the rural sector. This accreditation is intended to signal to prospective customers that those who hold the accreditation will work to the highest standards to achieve effective pest control with minimum adverse effects on wildlife and the wider environment. Accredited technicians will be able to use the licensed “Wildlife Aware” logo as a visual representation of their skill and increased competence.

“Wildlife Aware” accreditation is given to the individual who attends the course and passes the examination and will follow the individual wherever he/she works. It does not provide accreditation for the company or organisation which employs him/her. However, attendance at the course by company employees, and the subsequent accreditation of those trained, will provide evidence that the organisations involved wish to operate to the highest practical standards so as to avoid wildlife exposure to rodenticides during rodent pest management operations.

Continuing Professional Development

The one-day course will carry 10 Continuing Professional Development (CPD) Points.

Course Outline

Five modules will be presented during the one-day course:

1. *Why Control Rodents.*
 - Provides an understanding of the problems caused by rodents to the rural economy. Particular emphasis is given to diseases carried by rodents and to the quest for quality within accreditation schemes driving an increased requirement for rural rodenticide use.
2. *Rodent Species – identification and behaviour.*
 - Outlines important pest recognition characteristics and behaviour relevant to implementing effective control. Draws attention to other non-target rodents that may be affected by rural rodent control programmes.
3. *How to control rodents on farms.*
 - Explains the fundamentals of applying rodenticides safely and effectively on farms. Additional information for gamekeepers who apply rodenticides away from buildings.
4. *Environmental Impacts of Rodenticides.*
 - Describes primary and secondary routes of wildlife exposure to rodenticides, adverse effects of rodenticides and distribution of residues among key wildlife species.
5. *The Campaign for Responsible Rodenticide Use.*
 - Gives the objectives of the CRRU initiative, the important mitigation measures required to reduce wildlife contamination and the potential benefits of each of the measures recommended.

Aims and Objectives

The syllabus has been designed to allow the training to be carried out in a single day. The structure of the day does not permit practical sessions but the training is intended to provide useful practical advice. Where theoretical material is presented, a clear linkage to practical outcomes is provided throughout.

All course participants will be expected to possess clear and current practical competence in rodent pest management derived formally from prior attendance at appropriate training courses, such as those offered by the British Pest Control Association and the National Proficiency Test Council. They will also be able to demonstrate competence by being engaged in rodent pest management on a regular basis and having experience in a range of practical situations.

The course will provide relevant practical information on:

- the importance of rodents and the damage that they cause in rural enterprises
- the biology of rodent pests as it is relevant to effective management and to environmental concerns
- non-target rodents which are the principle route of exposure to rodenticides for many wildlife species
- the fundamentals of rodent control in rural settings, particularly aspects which create risk to wildlife
- how wildlife is exposed to rodenticides, the species concerned and the extent of contamination
- a code of practice which, when adopted as a part of practical rodent pest management processes, will result in minimised exposure of wildlife and reduced adverse environmental effects.

The Examination

Participants will be given an opportunity to provide feedback on the course at the end of the day. However, no examination will be undertaken on the day of the training.

Instead, an examination will be available subsequently on-line via the BASIS website. The examination will be multiple-choice and will be moderated and marked by BASIS. The examination will cover material from each of the 5 modules shown above:

- 30 multi-choice questions
- 10 “true” or “false” questions

Those who pass the examination will receive a notification and certificate from BASIS. Those who wish to take advantage of the offer from CRRU and BASIS of “Wildlife Aware” accreditation will apply to BASIS after successfully completing the examination.

Those who fail the examination will be given the chance to retake the exam. There will be one retake allowed ONLY. Details of how to retake the exam will be given in the candidate notification letter.

THE COURSE SYLLABUS

Module 1 - Why Control Rodents?

1.1 Competence

To develop knowledge of the scope of impacts that rodent infestations have on rural enterprises.

1.2 Performance Criteria

Candidates must have the ability to:

- explain the relative importance of the main impacts of rodent pest populations on different types of rural enterprise
- understand the potential impacts of rodents as carriers of human and animal diseases

1.3 Essential Knowledge and Skills

Candidates must have the ability to:

- list the main adverse impacts of rodents in rural areas and discuss their importance
- list some of the important diseases transmitted by rodents to humans and livestock and name the organisms that cause them
- explain the drivers for improved hygiene in animal rearing and arable farming
- describe some of the important accreditation schemes and summarise the positions they adopt with regard to management of rodent infestations

Module 2 - Rodent Species – Identification and Behaviour

2.1 Competence

Develop an ability to distinguish between the different rodent pest species, understand key differences in their biology and behaviour that are important in control. Know the important non-target rodent species and aspects of their biology and behaviour that predisposes them to accidental exposure to rodenticides and then become instrumental in the contamination of predators and scavengers.

2.2 Performance Criteria

Candidates must be able to:

- describe all important target species
- describe some key non-target rodent species
- explain routes of exposure of predatory and scavenging wildlife via consumption of contaminated non-target rodents
- understand aspects of pest biology and behaviour that are important in the management of rodent pests

2.3 Essential Knowledge and Skill

Candidates must have the ability to:

- identify target rodents and non-target rodents, using both common names and scientific names
- describe which rodent species may be controlled with anticoagulant rodenticides and those that may not
- understand the importance of non-target small mammals in the contamination of wildlife with anticoagulant rodenticides
- discuss routes of rodenticide exposure of wildlife through consumption of both target and non-target rodents
- describe those aspects of pest rodent behaviour that may influence the effectiveness of rodent pest management

Module 3 - How to control rodents on farms

3.1 Competence

Develop knowledge of all aspects of the integrated control of rodents in rural areas, with special emphasis on safe and effective use of rodenticides both in and around buildings and away from buildings.

3.2 Performance Criteria

Candidate must be able to:

- describe the control options available and the role each plays in rodent pest management
- understand the step-wise implementation of a rodent management plan
- know the different methods used for rodent control away from buildings

3.3 Essential Knowledge and Skills

Candidates must have the ability to:

- describe the elements of an integrated rodent pest management programme and discuss strengths and weaknesses of each element
- list the 5 steps to an effective rodent management programme
- understand the importance of a COSHH risk assessment
- understand the importance of an environmental risk assessment
- know the key risks encountered during rodenticide applications
- discuss important measures to mitigate risks
- understand the requirement to keep accurate and complete written records of all activities undertaken
- discuss the possible influence of rodenticide resistance on rodent control operations
- describe the different requirements of a rodent management plan when this is to be implemented away from buildings

Module 4 – Environmental Impacts of Rodenticides

4.1 Competence

Develop thorough understanding of the potential impacts of rodenticides on wildlife and the wider environment.

4.2 Performance Criteria

Candidates must be able to

- demonstrate an understanding of the effects of vertebrate pest control agents on wildlife
- demonstrate knowledge of the Wildlife Incident Investigation Scheme (WIIS) and the Predatory Birds Monitoring Scheme (PBMS)
- demonstrate an understanding of exposure/contamination pathways

4.3 Essential Knowledge and Skills

Candidates must have the ability to:

- describe the main anticoagulants used in the UK and the restrictions placed on their use
- understand the reasons why rodenticide use in rural areas is important in terms of contamination of wildlife
- understand the two main unwanted impacts of exposure of wildlife to vertebrate control agents
- understand the objectives and operation of WIIS
- understand the different causes and consequences of WIIS incidents
- understand the extent of low-level residues of anticoagulants in wildlife, including data provided by the PBMS and other studies
- understand the pathways by which different wildlife species are exposed to rodenticides
- interpret the findings of the relevant studies in terms of impacts on wildlife populations

Module 5 – The Campaign for Responsible Rodenticide Use

5.1 Competence

Develop knowledge of the purpose of the CRRU initiative and the principle ways in which undesirable impacts of rodenticides on wildlife can be avoided.

5.2 Performance Criteria

Candidates must be able to

- demonstrate knowledge the CRRU initiative
- demonstrate knowledge of why responsible use of rodenticides is important in the UK

5.3 Essential Knowledge and Skills

Candidates must have the ability to:

- understand the objectives of the CRRU initiative
- understand the importance of responsible rodenticide use in terms of the regulation of rodenticide use
- understand the relationship between the CRRU code and product labels
- demonstrate thorough knowledge of the CRRU Code
- explain the benefits of the Code's seven points in terms of their individual effects in reducing wildlife exposure to rodenticides

ACCREDITATION

Candidates who have completed the course and who have attained a pass mark in the on-line examination should apply to BASIS (Registration) Limited to obtain details about accreditation. See back cover for contact details. "Wildlife Aware" accredited technicians are able to use the "Wildlife Aware" logo after signing the license agreement which will be sent to them with the application forms. The annual cost for "Wildlife Aware" accreditation is £50 per annum.