

# Potent rat poisons killing off wildlife

By Tom Knudson, Sacramento Bee

Outside Palm Desert, a young bobcat dies mysteriously at a nature preserve. South of Nevada City, a farmer finds an owl dead near his decoy shed. In San Rafael, a red-shouldered hawk bleeds heavily from its mouth and nose before succumbing at an animal care center.

Each of those incidents shares a link to a widely used toxin that is turning up at dangerous levels in wildlife across California: rat poison.

Over the years, rat poison has spared state residents untold filth and disease. But a new generation of highly toxic, long-lasting poisons is killing not only rats, mice and ground squirrels, but whatever feeds on them, too.

As a result, toxins are rippling outward from warehouses to woodlands, from golf courses and housing complexes to marshes and nature sanctuaries. In California, the victims include bobcats, barn owls, red-tailed hawks, coyotes, kit foxes, kestrels and scores of other predators and scavengers.

“Rodenticides are the new DDT,” said Maggie Sergio, director of advocacy at WildCare, a Bay Area wildlife rehabilitation center that has responded to dozens of poisoning cases. “It is an emergency, an environmental disaster. We are killing nature’s own rodent control.”

Researchers say the federal government has been slow to respond to the problem, which has been building for more than a decade. This June, after years of study, regulations take effect nationwide banning the most toxic, long-lasting rat poisons from hardware stores, big box home improvement centers

and other consumer outlets.

**Read the whole story**