Secondary Poisoning of Wildlife

When wildlife consumes pest animals that have been poisoned, the poison can be fatal to not only the pest animal, but also to the wild animal that eats it. Some pesticides are typically used to kill pigeons, starlings, rats, and mice. But, predators like birds of prey, scavengers, and pets are also vulnerable to **secondary poisoning.**

Some pesticides may remain in the pest animal long after its death making it toxic for extended periods of time. The side effects to secondary poisoning can be reduced reproductive success, birth defects, developmental issues, persistent internal bleeding, and death.

The number of wildlife deaths associated with secondary poisoning is not well known. Mass mortalities of predators and scavengers have been documented. However, for some species, the loss of even a few individuals can impact the entire population.

Please help us reduce secondary poisoning to conserve wildlife!

Take Precautions

All pesticides must only be used in strict accordance with their labels. Secondary poisoning is possible with chemicals such as aminopyridine, brodifacoum, famphur, sodium cyanide, strychnine, zinc phosphide, chlorophacinone, warfarin, and other anticoagulants used to reduce or eliminate pests. ***Pesticide applicators and property owners can take a few precautions to avoid or minimize the likelihood of secondary poisoning of wildlife.***

- Only use anticoagulant baits (many rodenticides) sparingly to target the pest and avoid poisoning non-target wildlife.
- Place bait indoors or very close to structures, and in approved bait stations to avoid the potential of wildlife consuming contaminated pests.
- Have a plan for the safe, prompt collection and disposal of contaminated pest carcasses. Daily monitoring of the treated area to remove and safely dispose of dead animals will reduce the likelihood of secondary poisoning.

Legal Implications

State law protects all wildlife in Arizona. Some species are protected by Federal law such as the Migratory Bird Treaty Act, Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act, and Endangered Species Act.

These state and federal laws prohibit the intentional and incidental killing of wildlife without proper authorization. Secondary poisoning of protected wildlife could be considered unlawful by law enforcement.

Pesticide applicators and property owners could be liable under State and Federal laws if protected wildlife is killed by the irresponsible use of pesticides. These laws pose fines of up to $200,000 and prison time.

Despite even the best management practices, secondary poisoning can occur and should be reported to the Arizona Game and Fish Department at (877) 972-8426 or your local tribal wildlife agency if on tribal lands, and http://pi.ace.orst.edu/erep/.

White-Throated Woodrat by George Andrejko