



Report to Council

From the Office of Councillor Meghan Lahti

Date: July 30, 2020
Subject: Rodenticide-Ban Bylaw

Purpose

To provide recommendations regarding a bylaw which prohibits the sale of or use of rodenticides on public property in Port Moody.

Recommendation

THAT staff be directed to report back with a bylaw to prohibit the use of rodenticides on all Port Moody-owned properties as recommended in the report dated July 30, 2020 from Councillor Meghan Lahti regarding Rodenticide-Ban Bylaw;

AND THAT the City of Port Moody only use the services of companies that do not use anticoagulant rodenticides when providing vector control on private property;

AND THAT staff be directed to communicate to residents and businesses in the City of Port Moody Council's direction in this matter, including information regarding the harmful impacts of anticoagulant rodenticides, and provide options for better alternatives that are available;

AND THAT Council send a letter to the Province of BC, copying all MLAs, requesting a province-wide ban on the use of rodenticides;

AND THAT the recommendations from this report be forwarded to all BC municipalities and submitted to UBCM as a late resolution.

Background

The use of rodenticide has been found to have an impact on domestic and wild animals. There are safe alternatives that are non-toxic and should be used instead of rodenticides. Port Moody needs to show leadership and ban all sale and use on public lands.

Discussion

Rats and mice can cause significant property damage because they chew or gnaw on building insulation, siding, wallboard and wires. They eat a variety of foods, including food you might

have stored in your cupboards or pantry. If you eat food that has been contaminated by rodents, you may get a foodborne illness. In some cases, diseases can be spread if you are bitten by a rodent, or if you are exposed to areas that are contaminated by rodent urine or droppings. Hantavirus Pulmonary Syndrome (HPS) has been associated with the inhalation of dried droppings from the wild deer mouse. HPS has not been associated with the more common indoor mice.

When trying to deal with pests such as rats and mice, people often turn to products known as anticoagulant rodenticides, which are available at most local hardware stores and are marketed to lethally “solve” the issue with poisoned bait. Unfortunately, researchers have been collecting evidence for years showing that it’s not just nuisance rats that can end up dead. Some of the most recent studies have found that domestic animals such as dogs and cats as well as wild animals such as squirrels, bobcats and owls often become victims of rodenticides. The list of potentially affected wildlife is long — basically anything that preys on a rodent could be at risk, because the poisons are so toxic they travel up the food chain, and in some cases, can remain in an animal’s body for years. It can even leapfrog *in utero* from one generation to the next, which is a huge problem. This ‘food web’ contamination is a red flag indicator for not just one species but all other species that are dependent on that prey item.

Anticoagulant rodenticides are sold under dozens of brand names with a number of different active ingredients. They work by affecting the animal’s processing of vitamin K, which inhibits clotting and coagulation, ultimately leading to uncontrolled internal bleeding. One of the most common first-generation anticoagulant rodenticides uses the blood thinner called warfarin as its active ingredient, but rats appear to have developed a resistance to it. Manufacturers responded by developing a new line of more toxic products, using active ingredients like brodifacoum or bromadiolone, which have no medicinal uses. These second-generation rodenticides pack a bigger punch in a small amount and are designed to deliver a lethal dose to a rodent with just one feeding. They also have longer half-lives, which means the poison can stay in the animal’s liver for years, compared to just days or months with the first-generation poisons. Both of these factors contribute to an increased possibility of nontarget wildlife eating poisons intended for rodents. Second-generation rodenticides don’t kill animals right away. It can still take days, and in that time a sick animal often consumes more of the poison and exhibits signs of illness, making it an easier target for predators.

Recently the BCSPCA has sounded the alarm regarding the harms that rodenticides pose for our wildlife. In 2020 so far, the BC SPCA supported the District of North Vancouver and the District of Saanich to ban anticoagulant rodenticide use on all district-owned properties and will provide education to their residents about the harmful impacts of homeowner use. Dr. Sara Dubois, chief scientific officer for the BC SPCA, notes that both homeowners and pest control companies use different kinds of rodenticides without even knowing if the poison is effectively reducing rodent issues. She says it is time to rethink the use of rodenticides completely, and I agree. “Alternatives to rodenticides are now growing in availability and effectiveness, and ongoing research will hopefully eliminate their use completely in the future.”

Not only are many predators to rodents – like owls, hawks, raccoons, bobcats, coyotes and even our pet cats and dogs – being killed by eating poisoned rodents, pesticides can make their

way up higher through the food chain to eagles and cougars. “Dying by internal bleeding over a period of days is not a humane death for rodents or their predators – just because these products are legal to buy and sell, it does not mean they are humane,” Dubois emphasizes.

In 2003, Council brought in a pesticide control bylaw, which prohibits the sale and use of pesticides in Port Moody on both private and public lands. This bylaw was the first of its kind, because it not only addressed the use of pesticides on city-owned land, but also on private property. Similarly, it is important that any bylaw on the use of rodenticides must do the same by banning not only the use of rodenticides on city-owned properties, but also the use on private property. The use of rodenticides as a method to eradicate rodents on private lands is prevalent, and is a major contributor to the problem of nontarget animals eating poison intended for nuisance rodents. In addition to banning the use, the city must provide the residents with information about how to safely address rodents without the use of rodenticides.

Other Option(s)

THAT the report dated July 30, 2020 from Councillor Meghan Lahti regarding Rodenticide Ban Bylaw be received for information.

Financial Implications

There are no financial implications related to this initiative.

Communications and Civic Engagement Initiatives

There would be communications and civic engagement required with members of the public if the recommendation is passed. Staff would need to report back on a communications strategy to inform the public about alternative methods of vector control. The City should also communicate out to the public about the new Rodenticide-Ban Bylaw, once it has been formally adopted.

Council Strategic Plan Objectives

This bylaw would show environmental leadership, which is a pillar of the strategic plan.

Attachment(s)

1. SGAR Fact Sheet.
2. BC SPCA sounds alarm on dangers of rodenticides for wildlife and pets.
3. Letter from Elana Varner – Letter of support – 25Aug2020.