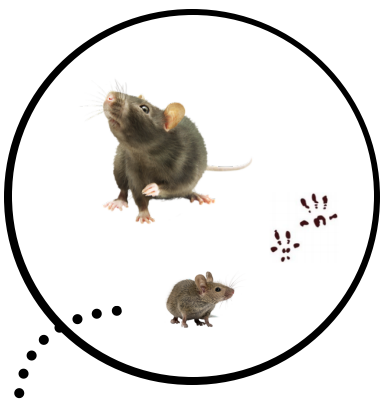
BIOSECURITY FOR LIFE — PROTECTING SEABIRDS FROM INVASIVE PREDATORS

Found signs of stowaways onboard your boat? Here are the steps to take:



- DO NOT LAND ON A SEABIRD ISLAND
- NEVER PUSH STOWAWAYS OVERBOARD DEAD OR ALIVE!
- DO NOT ASSUME ONLY ONE INDIVIDUAL STOWAWAY IS ABOARD
- DO RETURN TO A MAINLAND HARBOUR

Step 1: Return to the mainland

Manage expectations to your boat users. ***"There is a stowaway onboard and we need to return to the mainland to try and catch it. If this rodent reaches the island it will have huge consequences for seabirds and people."***

If you are the owner/skipper/decision maker

- Rearrange your island visit.
- If you're operating the boat for tourists, explain the need to make these alternative arrangements. **Tourists visiting islands for the natural beauty and seabirds are likely to understand and respect your decision.**

If you are employed as the skipper/ boat operator

- Contact the boat owner to make alternative arrangements.
- You may feel a lot of pressure to make this decision, particularly if the owner is unavailable or tourists are onboard. **But, always remember rodent incursions have consequences not just for seabirds but for boating business' too e.g. fewer seabirds = less of an attraction for tourists. One single pregnant rodent means a population will establish quickly and eradications are very expensive. Your decision-making is vital.**

Step 2: Find the stowaway & set stations

You'll need to carry out a thorough check of your boat to find the stowaway to find the stowaway and look for further sign in preparation for the next steps;

- Whether you use snap traps or rodenticide bait, you need to place them in stations (e.g. *Protecta* bait station, see image right) to reduce risk to non-target animals
- Aim to use one bait station per five metres where rodents are likely to be e.g. along internal linear features and in dark corners.
- Remove food sources on the boat so any rodents are more likely to enter these stations to take the lure and or bait.
- Check all spaces onboard which could hide a rodent nest (e.g. spare sails below deck or life jackets under seats) this information will further help you decide where to place your stations.

Protecta station

Step 3: Set up snap traps (kill traps)

- **Use a lure** (peanut butter and oats is recommended)
- **Ensure traps in *Protecta* stations are on a level surface** (if the trap rocks, it may scare rats in particu
- If you are unsure which rodents are present, set mouse and a rat traps.
- **Health and Safety.** Refer to guidelines for individual trap types and seek assistance if unsure. As som traps are capable of breaking a person's fingers, ensure you only ever handle a set trap from the back. Find out more in the resource 'Use of kill traps'.

A *Trapper T-Rex* trap inside a *Protecta station*

Peanut butter and oats as a lure

Step 4: Set up rodenticide bait (poison wax blocks in bait stations)

Protecta station with wax bait blocks.

Bait stations should contain 3 x 20g wax blocks of rodenticide bait.

- **Check 'bait take' daily,** replace any bait showing rodent gnaw marks (image below right) so you can see 'fresh take' and monitor when this 'bait take' ceases.

When selecting rodenticide bait to purchase, always read the label and follow the instructions for use.

- Rodenticide bait products are available to unlicensed users in containers up to 1.5kg.
- You will be using bait in an 'indoor situation', within boats, or within 50m from a building on the quay/ boat yard/ dry dock.
- **We recommend a second-generation toxin in wax block form** (bromadiolone, difenacoum or difethialone).
- A full list of rodenticide products currently authorised for use in the UK is available on the HSE website.
- **If you run a boat-based business consider you or your staff doing a professional 'safe handling of rodenticide' course.** Campaign for Responsible Rodenticide Use (CRRU) www.thinkwildlife.org run the stewardship scheme, oversee standards, and direct you to training materials and relevant courses.

Health and Safety.

- Rodenticide use must be undertaken in accordance with the product label, including wearing gloves when handling.
- Antidote (Vitamin K1 injection) can be offered to any individuals known or suspected to have eaten bait.
- Dispose of used bait very carefully, it can still kill non-target species. Dispose of according to the instructions on the label, never in an open bin where it could be eaten by cats, dogs or birds. Only buy what you need to avoid stockpiles being left lying around. Find out more in the resource 'Use of Rodenticide bait'.

Rat gnaw marks on a wax bait block

Step 5: Prepare in advance, decide which method is best for you

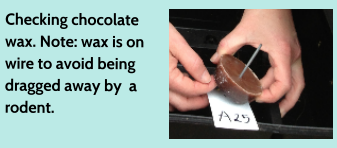
Snap traps (kill traps in stations)

- Setting traps inside properly fitting bait stations (e.g. *T-Rex* traps inside *Protecta stations*) increase the chances of a clean kill.
- Ideally these should be set in the evening and disarmed each morning. This will keep non-target species which are active in the daytime safe, while targeting nocturnal rats. Regular checks also mean that any rodents that haven't been killed outright can be humanely killed.
- Your evidence of success will be a rodent carcass in the trap (but never assume there is only one rodent).
- Requires a lure such as peanut butter and rolled oats.
- Can kill the rodent quickly (if traps are in locations suitable for rodents, have good bait and the more traps set, the better probability of success).

Rodenticide bait (wax blocks in bait stations)

- The rodent is unlikely to die in the *Protecta station*. It will take bait, feel lethargic and likely die elsewhere several days later, possibly off the boat, so your evidence of success will not be a carcass but 'bait take' and then 'no bait take'.
- Can take longer to confirm rodent dispatch compared to the kill traps.

Use monitoring non-toxic tools alongside traps and bait


Checking chocolate wax. Note: wax is on wire to avoid being dragged away by a rodent.

Footprint ink tracking tunnel pack Gotcha tracking tunnel

If you detect rodent sign on these non-toxic tools but rodents are not entering trap or bait stations, changes need to be made to your trap, baits or location of stations to make them more attractive to rodents. Use chocolate wax (image above, left) as when rodents gnaw the wax they will leave detectable teeth marks. Use ink tracking tunnels (image above, right) with a bait such as peanut butter; when rodents walk through to eat the bait, they leave footprints. Find out more in the resource 'Rodent surveillance tools - why, what, how, when'.

Step 6: YOUR decision making is vital - Best to worst case scenarios

You use methods to deter rodents (e.g. rope rat guards when your boat is on the quay), freight and luggage checks, and you use monitoring stations to detect rodents and check these on the day of a planned trip, not going if you find any sign.

After sign of a stowaway;

Best — Finding and killing the rodent immediately scenario - You return to the mainland, find the rodent and kill it. You assume there are more stowaways, so you put traps and/or bait stations in place and add monitoring tools (e.g. chocolate wax). You check these daily until confident there are no longer rodents onboard. You check all stations immediately prior to departure for a seabird island, not making the trip if you find any rodent sign.

Good — Kill (snap) traps scenario - You cannot find the rodent, so you set kill traps and check them daily. You catch the rodent and as above, you assume there are more rodents onboard continuing checks, using monitoring tools too. You check all stations immediately prior to departure for a seabird island, not making the trip if you find any rodent sign.

Good — Rodenticide bait scenario - You cannot find the rodent, so place in your boat you place 3 x 20g wax blocks of rodenticide bait in bait stations (carefully following the instructions on the pack, ever mindful of risks to non-target animals). You check the bait daily for a few consecutive days. You are aware you may not find a rodent carcass on the boat (they could die elsewhere) so monitor 'bait take' and then 'no further bait take' before you resume your island trip. Even when you feel a level of confidence that the rodent(s) may no longer be onboard, you continue checks using monitoring tools too. You check all stations immediately prior to departure for a seabird island, not making the trip if you find any rodent sign.

Poor — Assuming there is 'just one rodent' scenario - You return to the mainland, carry out a check for an individual rodent, find it, kill it and assume there are no more rodents aboard, resuming your island trip. There could be another rodent onboard which you risk taking to the island.

Worst — No action scenario - You don't take precautions to prevent stowaways or any action to kill a stowaway on your boat. You transport the rodent to the island, risking huge consequences for seabirds and people. One single pregnant rodent means a population will establish quickly and eradications are very expensive.

We thank you for all you do to ensure this is not the case, continuing to protect special islands.

If you have questions or want further advice head to the 'Need expert guidance?' section.
www.biosecurityforlife.org.uk/boats

BIOSECURITY FOR LIFE
Find out more at biosecurityforlife.org.uk

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