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Chapter 14 PESTICIDE & COSHH - Rabbit & mole products

Before we examine this, I must record that all my comments on products in this or any other article, are my views , in my circumstances of use, and should not be looked on as an endorsement or condemnation of one product or another.

I my travels, I find that there are three products used by Groundsmen & Greenkeepers to get rid of rabbits (a 4th, very effective product, is lead injections at 800 mph!!!!)

1. CYMAG
2. PHOSTOXIN
3. TALUNEX

They all work on the principal that dampness - water - acting on the powder or pellet will react and give off a poisonous gas. The rabbits breathe in this gas and die. If we breathe in this gas it would also kill us - all three are **very toxic**. For this reason, all are Part 1 Schedule 1 Poisons under the Poisons Rules 1982. If you buy these products you must be able convince the seller that you are competent and detail where you are going to use it. If the pesticide is stolen, you will have to inform the Police immediately.

The first part of any RISK ASSESSMENT is to read the label carefully.

MAFF No 6651

Product CYMAG

Manufacturer Zeneca

Use : A poisonous gassing compound for control of rabbits and rats

AI : sodium cyanide 40% w/w

Formulation : Gas generating powder

Mode of Action :Hydrogen cyanide gas is produced when chemical is place on moist earth.

It should be used only in rabbit and rat holes out of door and well away from buildings

Hazard Warning VERY TOXIC in contact with skin, by inhalation or if swallowed

Special Instructions The Poisons Rules 1982 and Poisons Act 1972 apply to this product

DANGEROUS to fish

DANGEROUS to people and livestock

Because of its HIGHLY TOXIC NATURE a special set of precautions applies to this product and must be followed carefully

Use only in the presence of another person aware of the symptoms and first aid treatment for hydrogen cyanide poisoning and provided with amyl nitrite for use in an emergency.

MEL - Maximum Exposure Limits apply to this chemical

MAFF No 1775

Product PHOSTOXIN

Manufacturer Rentokil

Use A hydrogen phosphide generating compound used for killing

moles & rabbits

AI aluminium phosphide 57%

Mode of Action Hydrogen phosphide gas is produced when chemical is in contact with moisture.

Formulation Gas generating tablet

Hazard Warning VERY TOXIC by inhalation, in contact with skin and if swallowed

Special Instructions Only open outdoors in a well ventilated place and for immediate use.

Do not use in wet weather.

Wear suitable protective gloves (Synthetic rubber) when handling the product.

Do not use within 10 m of human or animal habitation.

DANGEROUS to fish.

HIGHLY FLAMMABLE.

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MAFF No 6563

Product TALUNEX

Manufacturer Luxan

Use A hydrogen phosphide generating compound used for killing moles & rabbits

AI aluminium phosphide 57%

Mode of Action Hydrogen phosphide gas is produced when chemical is in contact with moisture.

Formulation Gas generating pellet for use with the Luxan Topex Applicator

Hazard Warning VERY TOXIC by inhalation, in contact with skin and if swallowed

Special Instructions Only open outdoors in a well ventilated place and for immediate use

Do not use in wet weather

Wear suitable protective gloves (Synthetic rubber) when handling the product

Do not use within 10 m of human or animal habitation

DANGEROUS to fish

HIGHLY FLAMMABLE

Having studied all the labels, you must then draw conclusions on what you have read, how and where it will be used and the competence of the operators available.

	PROS	CONS
CYMAG	Very effective due to fast acting powder formulation	Powder can be difficult to 'spoon' down the rabbit hole without contamination
	Can be pumped down the rabbit hole for more effect	Second operator required in case of accident - to apply antidote
		Operators are exposed at all times during application
		Fast acting powder can give off gas quickly if ground is wet
PHOSTOXIN	Easily applied to holes	Tablet can be difficult to place down the hole
	One tablet per hole	Operators are exposed at all times during application
	Slow acting - gas give off after hole is stopped	
TALUNEX	Easily applied to rabbit holes	
	Operator only exposed during attaching pellet cylinder to applicator	
	Exact measured dose per hole	
	Slow acting - gas give off after hole is stopped	
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Looking only at the above, it would appear on the face of it that Talunex should be used - 'risk assessment must take the safer way'.

However, there is built into Risk Assessment, and incidentally the Environmental Assessments, a concept of REASONABLY PRACTICABLE, which is basically a **cost/ benefit analysis**. It could be that only one application of a more toxic product is as effective as many applications of a less toxic one, building into the equation exposure times

as well as exposure values. Taken to the extreme, throwing sugar cubes down the rabbit hole is eminently safe but does not give control of the rabbit!

Evaluation must be made, after taking into account the above advantages and disadvantages, of the effectiveness of the applications. In the above example, if CYMAG was always effective but the others were less so, one could argue that the fact that exposure to Cymag only occurred once, whereas due to the lack of effectiveness, the others have to be applied several times - total exposure is thus increased.

TOTAL EXPOSURE=EXPOSURE **X** LENGTH OF EXPOSURE

There is no obvious black & white solution, you must look at your own circumstances.

In my circumstances, controlling rabbits round a College, I have no doubt that though Cymag and Phostoxin are very good, they cannot be used - I am safer & better using Talunex with the Topex Applicator. Many farmers I know have done the same exercise but chosen Cymag. Both of us are right - Neither of us are wrong,.

Work Environment and **Effectiveness** of product must be a part of RISK ASSESSMENT.

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