

The rat slayer

Seeking to safely snuff vermin

BY JILL HOCKMAN
STAFF WRITER

When Farmington Hills resident Jim Chuhuran gave away his company's organic rat-killing pellets to residents of two Metro Detroit-area neighborhoods who were battling rat infestation problems, he expected to receive words of thanks.

And he did. But despite those glowing testimonials from Dearborn Heights and Warren residents, Chuhuran also received word last month from the Michigan Agriculture Department that officials there have banned distribution of the rat-killing product until it's approved by the Environmental Protection Agency.

"We were expecting a pat on the back, not a slap on the hand," said Chuhuran, president of Farmington Hills-based Delmar Products Inc. Chuhuran claims the company's rodenticide — made up of molasses and ground plants — is nontoxic to humans and pets. Mice and rats that eat the product become dehydrated, crawl back into their holes and die, Chuhuran said.

But Tim Flint, regional supervisor for the pesticide and plant pest management division of the state Agriculture Department, said it's illegal to sell or give away rodenticide unless it's registered with the EPA. It can take years for the EPA to sign off on a product, Flint said. The law is set up to protect consumers, he said.

"We've got a regulatory responsibility to enforce Michigan's pesticide statutes," Flint said. Distributing an unregistered pesticide could result in fines of up to \$5,000 per offense, according to Flint. He would not say whether the state Department of Agriculture

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state Agriculture Department

ture has plans to prosecute Chuhuran for giving away the pellets to the Dearborn Heights and Warren residents in August and September.

"They're not coming after us," said Chuhuran, who said his company has applied for EPA approval, and expects to receive it within a few months. "They're only following the textbook rules. We want to do everything right. We didn't want to do anything wrong."

Chuhuran said major companies are already bidding on the rights to distribute the pellets, and people who want to buy the product have called him from Moscow, Saudi Arabia, Australia, London, Wales and Japan.

The story of Delmar's rat-killing pellets began about four years ago when Chuhuran's dog died of secondary poisoning after eating a mouse that had ingested a lethal dose of poison. "I was disgusted with all the toxic products on the market," said Chuhuran, a retired commercial builder who moved to Farmington from Bedford about a year and a half ago. Chuhuran said he thought up the idea of a nontoxic mouse and rat poison, and scientists at Delmar have been researching it ever since.

Chuhuran said the digestive systems of rats and mice allow them to be fatally dehydrated by the pellets. Other animals aren't harmed by the product, he said.

To prove that point, Chuhuran has gobbled the rat-killing pellets on a local television newscast. The product's ingredients have been dubbed safe for consumption by the Food and Drug Administration, but the FDA has not approved the pellets themselves, Chuhuran said.

When Chuhuran heard about rat infestation problems in Dearborn Heights and Warren, "I went over and just gave the product to them," Chuhuran said. "You have to take care of your own backyard."

Residents of both neighborhoods claim Chuhuran's product has helped to virtually eliminate the rat population.

"I have not seen a rat," said Marlene Moza, a South Warren homeowner who led the campaign against the rodents in her neighborhood by distributing the pellets to neighbors. She hasn't had to use the pellets in about three months, she said, but she'll use them again if she has to. "I'm not going to live with rats," she said. "If I have to go to jail for helping somebody, I'll do that."

Earl Berry, of the Golfview Manor neighborhood in Dearborn Heights, where it's illegal to use rat poison, was also enthusiastic about the product's success. He only had to put out the pellets one time, he said. "We've been really pleased with it," Berry said.



Look out, rats: Jim Chuhuran, displaying his rat-killing pellets, says, "We were expecting a pat on the back, not a slap on the hand."

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