

# GLAS participants obliged to take training on rodenticide use

By [Andy Doyle](#) on 24 March 2016

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Proper baiting is important to help prevent direct access to the rodenticide by other wildlife.

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**Training on the proper use of rodenticides is obligatory for all GLAS participants.**

A series of 13 pilot training courses for farmers accepted into GLAS ran throughout February. The courses were organised by Teagasc and were held in venues around the country.

A maximum of 20 farmers attended each course, which included both an indoor and an outdoor module. Each course provided instruction on the requirements of the GLAS scheme and practical information and

demonstrations on many of the 25 actions listed therein, one of which was the responsible control of rodent pests.

One of the requirements of the GLAS scheme is that participants should comply with the campaign for responsible rodenticide use (CRRU) in their daily farming activities.

The seven steps of the CRRU code forms part of each GLAS training course, as does familiarisation with approved bait box types (if there is a requirement to use rodenticides on the farm).

The most common pesticides used for rodent control are second-generation anti-coagulant rodenticides (SGARs), which are highly toxic substances.

Only those products that are registered with the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine (DAFM) may be used. Users must remember that the instructions for use, as stated on the product labels, are legally binding and must be complied with.

SGARs are highly persistent in the environment and can affect predators higher up the food chain that feed on rodents who may have taken these poisons.

Recent research by Birdwatch Ireland has revealed that 85% of barn owls in Ireland have traces of rodenticides in their bodies and, while the levels detected may be sub-lethal, it is still a matter of concern.

It is likely that other birds of prey such as red kite, kestrel and buzzards that feed on rodents may also be contaminated with residues of these rodenticides.

The responsible use of rodenticides can greatly reduce incidences of unintended poisoning of wildlife and this is what the CRRU code emphasises. It should form part of the integrated pest management plan which each farmer should have for their farm.

The seven steps of the CRRU code are as follows:

- Always have a planned approach.
- Always record quantity of bait used and where it is placed.
- Always use enough baiting points.
- Always collect and dispose of rodent bodies.
- Never leave bait exposed to non-target animals and birds.
- Never fail to inspect bait regularly.
- Never leave bait down at the end of treatment.

Some farmers may feel that leaving out poisoned bait on a permanent basis is necessary, but this is illegal and exposes non-target wildlife to unnecessary risk of poisoning, eg small mammals such as pygmy shrews, field mice, bank voles and white-toothed shrews in the south and west of the country.

Bait can also be taken by molluscs such as slugs and in this way accumulate in the bodies of birds that feed on them, which in turn is further concentrated in birds of prey such as sparrow hawks and peregrine falcons.

While such secondary poisoning is unintentional on the part of the farmer, abiding by the CRRU code greatly reduces the likelihood of it happening.

An integrated rodent pest management programme should be adopted on farms. This involves proofing of buildings to prevent rodent access, restricting access to food and water, control of infestations that occur, removal of harbourage. Monitoring using non-toxic or placebo baits should also be adopted on farms.

Following the evaluation of these initial pilot courses, a GLAS training day will be rolled out later in 2016 for all farmers in tranches one and two of GLAS. It is a requirement of the scheme that each applicant must attend such a course.

It is hoped that the successful implementation of GLAS over the five-year period from 2016 to 2021 will lead to a welcome improvement in Ireland's biodiversity.

Further information on CRRU can be obtained from the CRRU Ireland website at [www.crru.ie](http://www.crru.ie).