

Irresponsible use of rat poisons could lead to restrictions being imposed on farms

Darragh McCullough

RAT poison is set to become a restricted input on farms if a voluntary initiative does not succeed in convincing EU authorities that it is being used responsibly.

The Campaign for Responsible Rodenticide Use (CRRU) has already met with Bord Bia officials in a bid to get new rodenticide measures included in upcoming reviews of any quality assurance scheme.

"There is a real need to raise awareness among all users of

rodenticides about the harm that irresponsible use can cause," said CRRU's chairman Mark Lynch.

"An incredible 89pc of barn owls have low levels of rodenticide in their systems because the poison is getting into non-target species. In addition, there is now a suspicion that resistance is developing in rats in Britain due to prolonged exposure to the anti-coagulants."

CRRU is campaigning for rodenticide not to be left down for continuous periods of more than 35 days.

"If this initiative isn't successful by 2017 when the EU is reviewing the availability of these second generation rodenticides, it's quite likely that they will be removed from the market. At the very least, their use will be restricted to pest control professionals, which would impose an enormous additional cost on farmers," said Mr Lynch.

A Bord Bia spokesman said no changes to rules governing quality assurance schemes would be made without prior agreement by technical steering groups, including

farmer representatives.

The Sustainable Use of Pesticides Directive that came into effect this year does not currently include biocides.

However, the expectation is that the directive will be extended to include poisons such as rat bait within the next two years.

An ICMSA spokesman said

that while they accepted the need for responsible use of rodenticides, a balance was required to ensure farmers could control rodents.

25-10-2014