Newsom signs bill restricting use of toxic rat poison

Megan Fan Munce

Rat poisons containing the chemical diphacinone will be banned from being used in wildlife areas in California to prevent animals from being exposed to the toxic chemical.

Alexander W Helin/Getty Images

CLIMATE

Newsom signs bill restricting use of toxic rat poison

Most Popular

1. Tech layoffs: Three more Bay Area giants cut hundreds of jobs
2. Bay Area schools announced closures, increased security after
3. 'Ring of fire' eclipse peaks through clouds, delights Bay Area residents
4. Stanford students say lecturer called Jews in class 'colonizers,'...
5. Solar eclipse: How to safely take 'ring of fire' photos with a smartphone

Temu - one-stop shop

Temu

FALL SALE

ONLY 25¢

Sign In

Shopping revolution on Temu

California will restrict the usage of a toxic rat poison known to harm wildlife under a new law signed by Gov. Gavin Newsom on Friday.

Assembly Bill 1322, also known as the California Ecosystems Protection Act of 2023, adds pesticides containing the chemical diphacinone to an existing list of restricted rat poisons.

Diphacinone kills rats by preventing their blood from clotting, but it can also be fatal to birds, mountain lions and other animals who eat the poisoned rats, according to a 2021 report by the California Department of Fish and Wildlife. In 2020 and 2021, up to half of all animals who were found to have died from pesticide exposure had been exposed to diphacinone, according to the Department of Pesticide Regulation.

Under the new law, diphacinone rat poison is prohibited from being used in wildlife habitat areas. It also requires the Department of Pesticide Regulation to consider and adopt additional regulations to prevent wildlife from being poisoned by diphacinone.

The bill was written by Assemblymember Laura Friedman (D-Burbank) and was sponsored by the wildlife advocacy groups Center for Biological Diversity and Raptors Are The Solution. It contains exemptions for using the pesticide for research, agricultural activities and for eradicating invasive species, among other situations.
In May, the Department of Pesticide Regulation announced it would be reevaluating the safety of diphacinone after a state appeals court ruled the regulator had failed to examine the chemical’s impact when used over long periods of time or in combination with other rat poisons. The reevaluation, which began this month, will take into account new data showing both sales of diphacinone and the number of animals being exposed to the chemical have been rising in recent years.

The Pest Control Operators of California and the Household and Commercial Products Association opposed AB1322 while it was in committee, arguing that decisions about the safety of diphacinone should be left to existing regulatory processes.

But Lisa Owens Viani, director of Raptors Are The Solution, called it a sensible solution to a preventable problem.

“Building on existing legislation might not sound groundbreaking but it will pull the most toxic poisons off the market and encourage more humane ways to control the rodent population,” Viani said in a statement. “This is the least we can do to protect our pets, family members, and the wildlife we hold dear.”

Reach Megan Fan Munce: Megan.Munce@sfchronicle.com

Sign up for California Weather Wonks newsletter
Your daily Bay Area forecast and the why behind the weather.

Megan Fan Munce is a reporter who joined the San Francisco Chronicle as part of the two-year Hearst Journalism Fellowship, spending her first year of the program at the Houston Chronicle.

Munce grew up in San Jose before attending Northwestern University’s Medill School of Journalism, graduating with a B.S. and M.S. in journalism and a second major in political science.

She previously worked as an audience engagement fellow and a reporting fellow at the Texas Tribune, as well as an audience intelligence intern for KQED.

Top of the News

What’s the most realistic film depiction of S.F.? A 1978 horror movie

BY PETER HARTLAUB

Israel-Hamas war brings pain, unity to Bay Area Jewish community

BY TARA DUGGAN

Why I just moved my company’s headquarters back to downtown S.F.

BY ALI DIAB

Bay Area weather: Here’s when sunshine and warm temperatures return

BY GERRY DÍAZ

‘Ram raiding’ is rising as thieves use stolen cars to break into businesses

The Bay Area is enduring an epidemic of “ram raiding,” a tactic in which thieves use a car — frequently a stolen one — to smash into storefronts.

BY RACHEL SWAN