

Rat trap tested: effective but causes suffering

The trap is effective but it also causes a lot of suffering. That in brief is the conclusion of a study investigating a drowning trap for rats and mice by Wageningen Livestock Research, Utrecht University and the Dutch Pest & Wildlife Expertise Centre (KAD).

Questions had already been asked in Parliament about the trap. New methods for catching and killing rats and mice are constantly appearing on the market in response to the increasing restrictions on the use of poisons to deal with rodents – in part because the rats and mice develop resistance while the poison accumulates further up the food chain. Two key questions are whether the new methods are effective and whether they cause unnecessary suffering. Article 3.24 of the Nature Conservation Act states that unnecessary suffering must be avoided when catching or killing animals, and that applies to *all* animals living in the wild.

Practical test

To answer these questions for a certain type of drowning trap, Livestock Research performed a study that included a practical test on a farm in Limburg. The images were not pleasant, says pest expert Bastiaan Meerburg. Rather than stupefying the rodents as the manufacturer claims, the liquid they fell into when the trap door opened irritated them. It took over one and a half minutes (96 seconds) on average before the rat or mouse drowned. ‘Severe suffering’, ruled the experts from the three research institutions.

The research report was sent to the Ministry of Agriculture last week. The conclusion is that further optimization is required to reduce the negative effect on the welfare of the target animals. Or as Meerburg puts it: ‘I can see additional rules being introduced.’ ME