

Who eats first? Uptake of pellet bait by target and non-target species

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Abstract

House mice (*Mus domesticus*) are an important vertebrate pest in Australian agriculture. We studied the uptake of non-toxic placebo bait pellets targeted on house mice from bait stations in the grain-growing region of southeastern Australia. Bait stations allowed access for either ants; ants and mice or ants, mice, and birds. Soy meal bait pellets offered in December were of low preference for both ants and mice, but were eaten by birds in one study plot. In January, there were no differences between bait stations in the amount of wheat bait pellets removed indicating that the pellet bait had been primarily removed by ants. Most pellet bait was removed during the first 12 h after distribution. The results indicate that non-target species consumed pellet bait quicker than house mice. This has to be taken into account if similar bait pellets are to be used as carriers of lethal or sterility agents to manage house mouse populations.

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