



Arizona Farm Bureau Federation

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February 13, 2024

Submitted electronically via <https://www.regulations.gov>

RE: Docket No. EPA-HQ-OPP-2023-0567; Draft Endangered Species Act (ESA) Biological Evaluation for the Registration Review of 11 Rodenticides

To Whom It May Concern:

The Arizona Farm Bureau Federation represents farmers and ranchers from across Arizona. Our members produce an array of crops and livestock that contribute over \$23.3 billion of economic impact to the state. Many of our members rely on rodenticides to protect their crops, land, equipment, and infrastructure. Our comments are in response to the Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) Draft Endangered Species Act Biological Evaluation (BE) for the Registration Review of 11 Rodenticides.

Both farmers and ranchers use rodenticides to address rodents such as mice, rats, gophers, and squirrels that can wreak havoc in a number of areas of a farm or ranch. Rodenticides help farmers control these pests from infiltrating structures that house equipment, feed, or animals. In these situations, rodents can damage farm equipment and create unsanitary conditions for both feed and livestock. Rodents are carriers of at least 45 diseases, including salmonellosis and pasteurellosis.¹ In dairy production, for example, these diseases lead to both economic and production losses through increased veterinary costs and decreased milk production and feed efficiency.² In other situations where crops are processed or stored, rodents pose food safety hazards again from the diseases they carry, as well as from hair shedding and fecal droppings. The resulting contamination can lead to significant economic losses due to product loss. In field crops and pasture and rangelands, gophers' and squirrels' burrowing activities damage fields and crops and create hazards for both humans and livestock. Furthermore, they can also cause serious and costly damage to irrigation systems, including canals and drip irrigation systems.

Last year, EPA's Proposed Interim Decision for Rodenticides (Docket No. EPA-HQ-OPP-2077-0750) included a number of proposed mitigation measures, including classifying certain rodenticides as restricted use, application limitations, and mandatory carcass search, that would impede access and create greater costs for the control of rodents on farms and ranches. As these mitigation measures are also included in the Draft BE, we incorporate by reference the comments we submitted to that docket (Comment ID: EPA-HQ-OPP-2016-0139-0217).

The Draft BE proposes updated listed species mitigation measures, which are concerning, including the two highlighted here: placement of bait stations within five feet of structures and the prohibition of broadcast and in-burrow uses in areas or at times of the year when the listed animals have access to the treated area. The decision of bait placement should be left to the discretion of applicators who have

¹ Esmail, S.H. Oct. 11, 2020. Rodent Impacts on dairy farm production and economics. Dairy Global. Accessed Feb. 12, 2024. [Rodent impacts on dairy farm production and economics - Dairy Global](#)

² Ibid

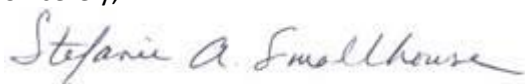
access to site-specific conditions, including avoiding potentially sensitive areas. Additionally, there is no scientific justification for the five-foot maximum placement of a bait station to a structure, and having such an arbitrary restriction could negatively affect rodent control efficacy. The prohibition of broadcast and in-burrow uses in areas or at times of the year when the listed species has access to a treated area is also concerning. It is unclear as to which use sites and if the mitigation only applies to the rodenticide products noted in the Draft BE (i.e., Rozol Prairie Dog Bait and Kaput-D Prairie Dog Bait), and specifically notes the measure is to reduce the potential for secondary exposure. Yet, in Table 5-1, it appears that this mitigation applies to primary and secondary exposure routes and to rodenticide active ingredients (ai) beyond first generation anticoagulants (FGARs) (Rozol and Kaput-D are FGARs). As we noted in our Rodenticide PID comments, certain crops grown in our state, notably alfalfa, where there is essentially year-round production, and it is necessary to address rodent populations on a year-round basis. Thus, it is uncertain what products remain available to effectively control rodents in this situation and potentially other agricultural settings.

Our concerns with the proposed mitigation measures are further complicated by the maps in the Draft BE, which are very general and do not include details regarding each species of concern. Further compounding our concerns is the Draft BE map that shows the entire state of Arizona subject to stricter mitigation measures due to the presence of bird and mammal species that the EPA has predicted as potential likely future jeopardy for one or more rodenticides and/or use patterns. Considering mitigation measures that restrict the use of bait stations, as well as those that prohibit broadcast and below-ground in-burrow application within USFS designated range of listed species and within and beyond the range and/or critical habitat for species, there is significant concern about the ability to control rodents in a manner that is not cost prohibitive. We strongly urge the EPA to work with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, as well as other species experts and stakeholders, to significantly refine its maps before moving forward with the final BE.

Rodenticides are at times necessary to control rodents that can cause crop damage, food safety hazards, and potential harm to humans, livestock, and farm equipment effectively. Many of the proposed restrictions, mitigation measures, and potential cancellation of products will essentially make the continued use of these products unworkable for agricultural producers in their efforts to control rodents effectively and efficiently on their farms and ranches. We recognize the EPA's goal of complying with the ESA for pesticide registrations and recommend that the Agency work with stakeholders to identify and evaluate mitigation measures that are feasible and effective at reducing exposure to listed species. Furthermore, because the Rodenticide Strategy is a component of the Draft BE and impacts future rodenticide registrations, the Agency must use accurate use patterns, science-based effects determinations, verified incident data, updated species range maps, and mitigation measures that are targeted and feasible.

We urge EPA to consider our concerns before it moves forward with finalizing the Draft BE to ensure these products remain a viable option for those who produce the food and fiber of our nation.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Stefanie A. Smallhouse". The ink is dark and the signature is fluid, with a large 'S' and a prominent 'A'.

Stefanie Smallhouse, President
Arizona Farm Bureau Federation