

Agricultural Innovation Insider Newsletter

Taking the Fight to Burrowing Pests

The Rodenator Pro blasts targeted pests and destroys their tunnels, eliminating the need for traditional pest control methods such as poisons or labor-intensive trapping

When battling the gopher in the classic movie *Caddyshack*, Bill Murray got it right when he said, “My enemy is a varmint, and a varmint will never quit...you have to fall back on superior firepower and superior intelligence.” The trouble was his efforts to kill the gopher - flooding its hole with a giant hose, spraying it with a fire extinguisher, and trying to blast it with explosives - were just too crude. While the dancing gopher made us laugh in *Caddyshack*, the economic havoc created by burrowing pests on farmers, growers, and others who work the soil is no laughing matter.

Fortunately, farmers, ranchers, nurseries, golf courses, water districts, even schools and park districts now have a sophisticated new weapon in their arsenal beyond poison, traps, and other traditional means. The weapon, the Rodenator Pro Pest Elimination System, is capable of delivering a precision underground shockwave to the targeted animals’ tunnels and dens. Not only does the Rodenator Pro exterminate the tenacious critters in short order, but also can collapse their tunnel systems to prevent re-infestation - without the use of chemicals or poisons, and the time-consuming tradition of baiting and trapping.

Asked about its effectiveness, Brett Johnson who farms 20 acres of hay in Hollister, Cal. says, “There’d be no dancing gopher left in *Caddyshack* had they used one in the movie. On a serious gopher infestation problem, I experienced a 95-98% kill rate my first pass through using the Rodenator Pro.”

Manufactured by Midvale, Idaho-based Meyer Industries, the Rodenator Pro injects a calibrated mix



Rodenator Pro Pest Elimination System is a sophisticated new weapon for your pest control arsenal beyond poison, traps, and other traditional means. The system is capable of delivering a precision underground shockwave to the targeted animals’ tunnels and dens, preventing re-infestation.

of propane and oxygen into the targeted rodent’s burrow. Since propane is heavier than air, the gaseous mix sinks to the lowest parts of the burrow where the nest usually is. When the operator electronically activates this mixture of blended gases from the end of the application wand, the oxygen mixture rapidly expands at 5,000 feet per second, creating a high pressure shockwave that kills the rodent and collapses the tunnel systems of many burrowing species.

“The concussive shockwave travels about a mile per second down the tunnels,” explains Johnson. “When it can’t expand any further, it takes the path of

least resistance, pushes upward, and blows the tunnels apart, burying the critters underneath.”

Farmers, growers, ranchers, and others long frustrated with the relative ineffectiveness and drawbacks of traditional pest elimination methods, are rapidly turning to the Rodenator Pro. Starting this fall, John Deere Farm dealerships worldwide will showcase the Rodenator Pro in a new video battling a saber tooth gopher that’s taken over a small rural community in the film short “Gopher Busters II.” The video will be introduced as part of John Deere Days.

The Drawbacks of Traditional Pest Control

While traditional pest control measures such as traps, poison, shooting, and introducing natural predators continue to be used, they all face significant limits on their effectiveness.

Traps, for instance, are limited by the number of available traps, and are time-consuming to bait, set, and check. “We just couldn’t keep up with the gopher population by trapping them,” explains Gary Farwell, who manages over 300 acres of vineyard in the Lakeport, Cal. area for Kendall-Jackson. “We lost about 350 vines last year due to gophers chewing through them. We had only so many traps. So we’d go to the spots with most activity, bury them, come back a couple hours later, and dig them back up. Many times the traps would come up empty.”

The use of poison bait or fumigation may raise the possibility of getting residual chemicals on crops and potentially into groundwater as well as the extreme possibility of secondary poisoning to non-target animals and pets such as dogs or cats, which may eat the poisoned rodents.

“Putting poison bait into holes is time-consuming and difficult when wet, especially in the rainy season, so it’s not ideal,” says Farwell. “Also, we don’t want poison too near our neighbor’s animals.”

Shooting offending rodents is workable only on a small scale, since pests spend the majority of their time underground, out of sight and out of range. Similarly, bringing natural predators such as cats and birds



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of prey into the picture may be a good idea, but can prove insufficient when the pests are mostly underground.

One glaring omission in all these traditional pest elimination methods, however, is they do nothing to remove the underground tunnel systems, which new pests can inhabit even if the original occupants are killed.

“If you leave the tunnels intact, it’s like an underground freeway system for pests,” explains Johnson. “New rodents will enter from the perimeter and penetrate to the middle of your field at the snap of a finger. Leave the tunnels, and depending on the lay of the land, they can become mini-aqueducts, channeling off water or causing flooding problems.”

The Biggest Bang for your Buck

For eliminating burrowing pests from gophers, ground squirrels, moles, voles, groundhogs, and prairie dogs to rats, fox, coyote, and woodchucks, a growing number of individuals are turning to the Rodenator Pro for relief. Registered with the Environmental Protection Agency, it’s providing fast, effective, environmentally

safe burrowing pest control.

After trying trapping, poison, and the usual methods, Johnson turned to the Rodenator Pro to eradicate a plague of gophers so numerous in his hay field “that the ground looked rototilled though it hadn’t been touched for years.”

He drove out in his ATV looking for fresh mounds, dug with a shovel to find the gopher runs, inserted the application wand, timed off the mix of propane and oxygen dispensed, and ignited it.

Because the system ignites the mixture of propane and oxygen immediately, it leaves no chemical residue behind. Since the resulting concussion will often collapse the tunnel system and bury the pest, there’s also no need to handle or dispose of the carcass.

“There’s no need to worry about leftover chemicals, or poisoning your neighbor’s pets because the gas is dissipated at use,” explains Johnson. “Anywhere the little buggers come up, I give them a welcome committee they won’t forget.”

“All methods are somewhat effective,” continues Johnson, “but the Rodenator Pro is where you get the biggest bang for your buck. It not only destroys the targeted pest, but also the tunnel system to stop re-infestation. It’s simple, direct, fast, with no need to set, bait, or check traps. Once I find the gopher mound, I could treat it in about 1-½ minutes, and be off to the next one. “It brings the fight to the pest, so you don’t have to wait around.”

Gary Farwell found that the Rodenator not only got the job done, but also got it done quickly on the 300 plus acres he manages for Kendall-Jackson. “Our crew killed off about 80% of the gophers the first time through,” he says. When you blow a tunnel, you know that whatever is in there isn’t coming out. Two guys covered 25 acres a day using the system. That’s four times as much ground as they did with other methods and at least 50% more efficient labor-wise.”

Ground squirrels are a problem on the 200 production acres of orchard Gino Favagrossa manages for CSU Fresno. The squirrels are a particular prob-

lem on a 60-acre block of rangeland converted into an almond grove.

“The squirrels would kill young trees, eating the tree roots, and of course take the nuts from the mature trees,” explains Favagrossa. “They like to bore under trees, reducing vigor, and cause some drip line damage from chewing. Because the orchard floor needs to be even for equipment to pick up the nuts, their dirt mounds can also disrupt the harvest.”

While still using poison bait, Favagrossa has found the Rodenator Pro very useful from spring to early summer when the squirrels are coming out of hibernation. “Because the females are tending their young then, they often won’t come out of their holes. That’s when the system works best. And when checking water, if we see a squirrel go down a hole, we’ll blow the hole. The only drawback is the noise. We farm in an urban environment, so we must consider time of use and location.”

“The system has been very effective in helping control our squirrel infestation at Fresno State,” concludes Favagrossa. “It’s increased the efficiency of our eradication efforts. Anyone dealing with a burrowing pest problem should at least consider it as part of their arsenal.”

The Rodenator Pro, with US and foreign patents pending, comes complete with hoses, regulators, safety equipment, applicator, stainless steel shovel, and a comprehensive instruction manual in English or Spanish.

For more info, call 877-RODENATOR; fax 208-355-0103; visit www.rodenator.com; email sales@rodenator.com; or write to Meyer Industries at PO Box 39, Midvale, ID 83645.

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