

PROJECT

PROBLEM IDENTIFICATION and ANALYSIS

We decided to analyze and solve the problem of rat poison. We chose this problem because Baldo, Giulia's dog, died when he was puppy because he ate rat poison.

There are many reasons why rat poison is a serious problem:

- 1) killing mice doesn't solve infestation in a definite way
- 2) rat poison hurts other animals. For example a study revealed that in Denmark 124 weasels out of 130 are infected by it
- 3) animals poisoned by rodenticide die in agony

To limit damage, experts put the poison in special boxes that prevent the bait from being dispersed in the environment. The problem is that in Italy, for example, 75% of rat poison is used by people who do not have adequate training.

SOURCES OF INFORMATION

During our journey we looked for information by consulting:

- specialized internet sites
- dossiers on rodent control
- scientific articles
- a book

We also met several experts:

- some experts in rat control
- a chemical researcher
- two experts from a local museum

EXISTING SOLUTIONS

There are a lot of solutions alternative to rat poison:

- 1) cats and other predators
- 2) lethal and non-lethal traps
- 3) ultrasound
- 4) repellents

We also tried to create a new natural mice repellent after reading on the internet about a recent study by Harvard University. This study is based on the discovery of a new mouse receptor gene which makes the mouse run away after smelling a substance in cat's urine called 2 Phenylethylamine. We are in contact with a chemist of the Italian National Research Centre to test the feasibility of our project.

5) Prevention

Nowadays experts aim at prevention. Actually killing mice isn't the right solution to this problem, it is just a means to overcome an emergency. As the graphic shows, mice carry on breeding exponentially until the environment reaches saturation and can't contain them any longer. This capacity is based on food and availability of shelters.

If this limit doesn't get lower, mice will continue to breed and killing them will become useless, because their population will go on reproducing. In order to lower this limit, it is necessary to manage waste better and also to block the access to our houses.

TEAM SOLUTION

The alternative solutions to rat poisons already exist and prevention must be promoted.

However what seems to be missing in Italy is accurate information about this topic.

By working on our project we realized that the main problem are people. They don't know the effects of rat poison.

That's why we planned an awareness campaign.

In Italy nobody has ever done it before, so it is an original solution.

AWARENESS CAMPAIGN & SHARING

We have already started our awareness campaign and we have created:

- A website to inform a lot of people
- A youtube commercial
- A video that explains our ideas
- Leaflets
- A videogame to raise awareness among the children, visible at our stand
- A blog with the collaboration of a Spanish team of FLL
- Some articles, published in the local newspapers

IMPLEMENTATION

To realize our idea we spent 500 euros on the videos and flyers, while the website we created was totally free. We have already convinced many people and we are confident that gradually a change of mentality will spread. Some experiences encourage us. For example, in Rome Piazza Vittorio Emanuele, was infested by rats. The problem was solved through the waste collection system, without using rat poison.