

Environment Committee JOINT FAVORABLE REPORT

Bill No.: HB-5217

Title: AN ACT CONCERNING THE USE OF CERTAIN RODENTICIDES.

Vote Date: 3/8/2024

Vote Action: Joint Favorable Substitute

PH Date: 2/28/2024

File No.:

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SPONSORS OF BILL:

Environment Committee
Rep. David Michel, 146th Dist.
Rep. Aundre Bumgardner, 41st Dist.
Rep. Joseph P. Gresko, 121st Dist.
Rep. Mary M. Mushinsky, 85th Dist.
Rep. Lucy Dathan, 142nd Dist.
Rep. Frank Smith, 118th Dist.
Rep. Emmanuel Sanchez, 24th Dist.
Rep. Christine Palm, 36th Dist.
Rep. Devin R. Carney, 23rd Dist.
Rep. Patricia A. Dillon, 92nd Dist.
Rep. Hector Arzeno, 151st Dist.
Rep. Geraldo C. Reyes, 75th Dist.
Sen. Julie Kushner, 24th Dist.
Rep. Moira Rader, 98th Dist.
Rep. Maria P. Horn, 64th Dist.
Rep. Kevin Ryan, 139th Dist.

REASONS FOR BILL:

Second-generation anticoagulant rodenticides (SGARs) are chemicals which seek to enable population control of rodents. The chemicals are consumed by rodents, which quickly eliminates them as it is absorbed into the body. Problems with the use of these products occurs when predatory animals, which feast on the carcasses of the now poisoned rodents, also suffer from the chemicals. The rodenticides can also wash into the nearby water supply, causing secondary impacts on other small non-pest creatures including pets. This bill therefore seeks to eliminate unrestricted use of these chemicals to help prevent knock-on effects on other wildlife.

SUBSTITUTE LANGUAGE:

The substitute language adopted a total ban on the use of SGARs, with exceptions laid out in the language for acceptable use of the products.

RESPONSE FROM ADMINISTRATION/AGENCY:

Katie Dykes, Commissioner, Department of Energy & Environmental Protection

The Commissioner expresses the belief that rodents pose a serious threat to human health, and the proposed total ban of rodenticides gives them concerns. DEEP expresses the belief that non-rodenticide alternatives pose just as much risk to humans, and that the risk associated with rodenticides must be balanced with the risk posed by not using them. Finally, DEEP believes that section 1 of the original bill conflicts with section 2 concerning the total ban of sales and distribution.

NATURE AND SOURCES OF SUPPORT:

Senator Bob Duff, 25th District

The Senator recounts a recent story in which he encountered a Cooper's hawk poisoned by chemicals. Upon contacting Christine's Critters, who diagnosed that the hawk's ailments, the Senator's beliefs were reinforced concerning the necessary ban on any second-generation anticoagulant rodenticide. Second generation anticoagulants were developed in the 1970's due to rodent resistance to first-generation products. The Senator explains they're especially hazardous because they are highly toxic and persist for a long time in body tissues. The Senator believes any harmful effects of second-generation anticoagulants rodenticides far exceed any benefits they may have.

Senator Christine Cohen, 12th District

A Place Called Hope is a rehabilitation site for birds of prey in the Senator's district. The Senator expresses the belief that harm rodents and pose a grave threat to our environment and wildlife population. The Senator notes that the Environmental Protection Agency removed second-generation anticoagulant rodenticides from consumer shelves ten years ago however they are still available on the internet to the public and licensed pest control companies.

Representative Lucy Dathan, 142nd District

The Representative reflects that rodenticides are aimed at killing rodents but their influence spreads much farther. According to the Center for Biological Diversity, rodenticides pose serious health consequences to the environment and the public. Science Daily reports that rodenticides are present in liver tissues of more than 80 percent of the northern goshawks and red kites. The Representative believes that safer alternatives are currently in use, and that a transition to them would help to protect Connecticut's environment.

William Lucey, Save the Sound

Save the Sound states that many homeowners and pest companies place bait boxes outside as a preventive method, causing animals die outside and end up washing into our waterways. As a past certified applicator for restricted pesticides, the testifier understands the current efforts by the EPA to review these toxins and require limits, but they should only be available to licensed applicators, not homeowners, and banned from any outdoor use.

Dr. James Lombella, President, CT Votes for Animals

Noting how the public is concerned about the use of second-generation anticoagulants, CTVA believes the bill as originally drafted was deficient. It is their belief that allowing licensed Pest Management Providers to continue to use SGARs is counterproductive to rodent control as it is the poisons, not who applies the poisons, that need to be eliminated. **Christine Kaminski, Linda Pleva, Karen Laski, and Susan Linker also submitted testimony on behalf of CT Votes for Animals.**

Robert La France, Director of Policy, Audubon

The Director supports mandating the Commissioner of DEEP to classify all second-generation anticoagulants rodenticides. At minimum, the Director believes SGARs should be strictly regulated by licensed, professional applicators. At the heart of the policy debate of this bill is whether the continued use of second-generation anticoagulants rodenticides will result in adverse effects to nontarget wildlife. The Director believes funding is needed to investigate the potential impacts of SGARs on nontarget wildlife; a Place Called Hope has collected information that should be included in the investigation.

Christine Clayton also submitted testimony on behalf of the Audubon Society.

Christine Cummings, Director, A Place Called Hope

The testifier experiences firsthand many of the issues arising from rodenticide use in the state. The testifier believes the real damage is done by the licensed pest control industry and their misguided strategy to address nuisance rodents, having a devastating assault on our wildlife. The Director believes rodenticide use is killing off predators meant to manage rodents and balance our eco-system. They suggest using safe non-toxic alternatives, which when used along with integrated pest management strategies they obtain long-term solutions.

Brian Halibozek, Scott Secki and Amanda Morgillo also submitted testimony on behalf of A Place Called Hope.

Nicole Rivard, Government Relations Manager, Friends of Animals

The testifier expresses the belief that the original language in the bill does not protect birds of prey, instead it protects people licensed to use second-generation anticoagulant rodenticides. They suggest amending the bill to ban the use of SGARs statewide to align with the California law which includes exceptions. Included in the testimony is an illustration depicting the SGARs bait box scam cycle.

Lori Brown, Executive Director, Ct League of Conservation Voters

The testifier states that rodenticides pose a great threat to non-target wildlife, pets and other animals that prey on rodents. They believe that bait boxes are put next to buildings, parks and places to eliminate rodents and this causes a risk as they are available to other animals. The testifier believes the bill is missing the core provision needed to prevent the use: to restrict the sale of these chemicals. They suggest banning the sale, use and application of SGARs, with exceptions, but to fully apply to places where people eat, live, shop, and work.

Cub Scout Pack 33

Atkin Graham, Ava Farley, and Noah Janis submitted testimony on behalf of their Cub Scout pack and learning about owls, where they learnt about how second-generation rodenticide poisons transfers to baby owls from the water and the food they eat.

Nancy Barmashi, Ct. Licensed Wildlife Rehabilitator

As a licensed rehabilitator, the testifier had seen the consequences of SGAR pest control. They state that SGARs kill raptors and other wildlife who consume their natural prey. There are many other ways to control the rodent populations and that what is needed is to ban the use of these products statewide.

Desiree Brooks, Wildlife Advocate

UCONN test results show that 59 out of 70 completed test results on dead specimens are positive for one or more in the ingredients in SGARs; the testifier suggests amending the bill to ban the sale and use of these pesticides statewide. They testifier believes that just registering these as use products does not stop the pest management providers from overusing and relying upon these potent poisons.

Laura Simon, President, Connecticut, Wildlife Rehabilitation Association

The testifier states that members of Connecticut's Association are seeing a rapid increase in the number of horrific cases of wild animals dying from secondary poisoning by rodenticides. The testifier recounts how the animals succumb to gruesome hemorrhagic deaths directly through secondary poisoning; second generation rodenticides are more toxic and remain in the animal tissue for a longer period, exposing predatory wild animals to secondary poisoning. A recent study by Tufts University found that 100% of the 43 tested red-tailed hawks were positive for anticoagulant rodenticides, and there are many studies that underscore the far-reaching impact of these toxins. The testifier concludes by suggesting an amendment be made to prohibit the sale and use of SGARs.

Annie Hornish, Connecticut Director, The Humane Society of the United States

The testifier states that entire ecosystems are negatively impacted by the uses of SGARs. It is their belief that the introduction of volumes of poison into our ecosystem does not occur any differently when applied by someone who holds a license as opposed to the layman. It is their belief that continued reliance of these toxins will persist in causing irreversible harm to our wildlife, our pets, our soil, and our water. The testifier provided suggested language.

Destiny Camacho and Sarah Field

As students at Common Ground High School, the testifiers are concerned about the negative impact that anticoagulant pesticides have on the birds in our environment. These pesticides do not break down easily and can remain in the environment for years causing long-term damage. They express the desire to restrict the use of anticoagulant pesticides and promote the use of alternative methods.

Ben Conlon

The testifier believes that rodenticides present significant environmental and health risks to unintended non-target species and that contamination of ecosystems due to rodenticides has far-reaching consequences. Rodenticides can accumulate in the food chain posing threat to children and pets that may inadvertently come in to contact with these substances. The testifier raises questions as to the long-term efficiency of these pest control methods.

Aziz Dehkon and Allison Pilcher, Connecticut Roundtable on Climate and Jobs

As a statewide nonprofit that builds alliances among constituencies to combat climate change, create jobs and promote racial economic, and environmental justice, the group

supports the restriction of the use of second-generation anticoagulant rodenticides. They believe the best line of defense against these rodents is exclusion and sanitation.

Ann Gadwah and Susan Eastwood, Sierra Club Connecticut

The Sierra Club believes that rodenticides spread their poison throughout the food chain, remaining active in the environment for months leading animals to die slowly. It is the club's belief that there are safer alternatives available.

Teri Eickel, Executive Director, Interreligious Eco-Justice Network

The Network expresses the belief that the bill is not strong enough and all SGARs should be banned.

Jonah Lipar, Student, Simsbury High School

The testifier states that preserving the populations of large raptors such as hawks and eagles is extremely important to the ecosystem. These birds are important to keeping the populations of small prey animals, including rodents, in check. It is the testifiers belief that reducing these populations will counterproductively increase our dependence of these chemicals, creating a feedback loop.

Amy Blaymore Patterson, Executive Director, Connecticut Land Conservation Council

The Council believes that second-generation rodenticides are especially hazardous and more toxic in a single feeding. Predatory wildlife is vulnerable to secondary dosing when they consume contaminated rodents. The Council thinks that biodiversity loss has reached unprecedented levels and we must take proactive measures including the elimination of food chain dosing must be taken.

Mary Palletier, Director, Park Watershed

The Director learned of the horrific toxic deaths cause by rodenticides when second-generation rodenticides were introduced; the distribution of these bait boxed is far beyond cities and more residents are witnessing the deaths of birds and mammals. The Director believes these bait-boxes contribute our toxic plastic waste problem and are a failed management strategy that needs to be corrected.

Dennis Riordan, President Menunkatuck Audubon Society

The society believes we are killing our wildlife with their own food and that to preserve hawk and other raptor populations in the state we must strengthen the restrictions on the use and sale of second-generation rodenticides.

A further 150 individuals also submitted testimony in support of the bill.

NATURE AND SOURCES OF OPPOSITION:

Jon Gaeta, Director of State Affairs, Responsible Industry for a Sound Environment

The group believes rodenticides are a critical tool for controlling rodent populations and the spread of transmitted diseases. Recalling the recent string of mild winters, the state mouse population has seen an increase. The testifier believes when rodenticides are applied according to their label instructions, they protect the citizens of Connecticut from disease and

property damage. The US EPA has taken steps to determine the necessity, safety, and efficiency of 10 rodenticides. The group states that DEEP and the US EPA have the authority and the scientific expertise to restrict these products as needed.

Peter Gorman, CT Environmental Council

The bill as originally written limits the access to this class of rodenticides to professionals who are trained and understand the risks, benefits, and proper use. The testifier believes proper measures should be used to minimize the impact these products have on non-target species, but not at the increase of pest populations in high density areas. It is their belief that the greatest benefit is the proper use under supervision of licensed professionals in high population density areas. The testifier believes that the bill fails to require all suspected non-target exposures be evaluated by DEEP.

Mark Kelbacher, President, Connecticut Environmental Council

The testifier recounts how in 2008 the United States EPA completed a review of rat and mouse poison products, and the conclusion was they should only be applied by professionals. It is their belief that when applied properly rodenticides serve an important role in protecting the citizens of Connecticut both from disease and property damage; licensed and trained applicators use SGARs in and around structures protecting public health and property from rodents.

Michelle Lopez Kopa, Senior Director, State Government Relations

The Director believes the bill as written will jeopardize the availability of products and undermine the existing regulatory process at the US EPA; the EPA initiated a registration review of these products including an endangered species pilot program. The Director believes a holistic approach to pest management is needed and this bill fails to acknowledge that approach.

Heather Millette and Emilio Polce, Connecticut Pest Control Association

The members of CPCA are committed to providing quality pest management service and are trained, licensed applicators of Second-Generation Anticoagulant Rodenticides. They believe SGARs are essential because of the bacteria, viruses, and other diseases rodents can transmit to humans. It is their belief that when applied in their self-contained bait stations, children or non-target animals are not able to enter or retrieve the bait. The bill as written bans the sale and removes them completely from the market; the testifiers suggest amending the language to remove section 2 entirely, as this would allow the SGARs to remain on the market but only to be sold to licensed professionals.

Lance Trovato, Verdant Pest Control

The testifier believes pest control plays a crucial role in safeguarding human and pet health; SGARs are highly efficient and provide a vital tool for maintaining hygienic living conditions. They believe that banning these rodenticides without an alternative will lead to an increase in rodent populations, potentially resulting in the spread of disease. The testifier suggests striking a balance between effective pest control and environmental considerations.

King Jones, President, Connecticut Pest Control Association

The Association's licensed applicators use SGARs in and around structures to protect the public's health and property from rodents. It is their belief that when applied in self-contained rodent bait stations, the stations do not allow children or non-target animals from entering or

retrieving the bait. They state that pest management professionals inspect the property, employing a comprehensive integrated management strategy to control the rodents. CTPCA request that section 2 be removed entirely from the bill.

Cornelia and Rus Fortier

The testifiers support the introduction of a total statewide ban of SGARs instead of the original language of the bill.

Francis Pickering

The testifier recounts a story of their recent interactions with rodents, and how SGARs were the only option to prevent the infestation of their property.

Cathy Popp

The testifier opposed the bill as originally written, suggesting that a total ban on SGARs in the style of the California program be implemented instead.

Michael Sprintz

The testifier opposes the original language of the bill, suggesting a total ban be the states and federal government be implemented instead.

Reported by: Pamela Bianca

Date: March 22, 2024