



City of Richmond

Report to Committee

To: General Purposes Committee **Date:** February 22, 2022
From: Peter Russell **File:** 10-6160-06/2021-Vol
 Director, Sustainability and District Energy 01
Re: **Banning Rodenticide on City-owned Property in Richmond Update**

Staff Recommendation

That, as described in the staff report titled “Banning Rodenticide on City-owned Property in Richmond Update”, dated February 22, 2022 from the Director, Sustainability and District Energy, the City continue the ban of rodenticides on City-owned property in Richmond until January 31, 2024.

Peter Russell
 Director, Sustainability and District Energy
 (604-276-4310)

Att. 3

| REPORT CONCURRENCE | | |
|---|-------------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| ROUTED TO: | CONCURRENCE | CONCURRENCE OF GENERAL MANAGER |
| Law | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | |
| Bylaws | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | |
| Building Approvals | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | |
| Parks Services | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | |
| Facility Services & Project Development | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | |
| Environmental Programs | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | |
| SENIOR STAFF REPORT REVIEW | INITIALS: | APPROVED BY CAO |

Staff Report

Origin

The City's Enhanced Pesticide Management Program was adopted in 2009 to reduce the community's exposure to pesticides and empower Richmond residents with alternatives to chemicals. In accordance with these principles, Council endorsed a one-year rodenticide ban for City-owned property on January 25, 2021. Subsequently, the Province also implemented an 18-month, temporary ban on select rodenticides in BC. The provincial ban, effective July 21, 2021, prohibits the use of selected rodenticides and also orders that a scientific review of these products be conducted to inform future recommendations on the matter. Since 1996, the City had an agreement with Vancouver Coastal Health Authority whereby the Health Authority undertook rodent management services on behalf of the City pursuant to Richmond's *Public Health Protection Bylaw No. 6989*. In April 2021, the City assumed all responsibility for managing rodents in Richmond including compliance with the ban, public education, and responding to complaints and general enquires.

This report provides an update on the City's one-year ban on rodenticides, outlines the City's existing community rodent management program and evaluates the provincial ban on rodenticides.

This report supports Council's Strategic Plan 2018-2022 Strategy #1 A Safe and Resilient City:

Enhance and protect the safety and well-being of Richmond.

1.2 Future-proof and maintain city infrastructure to keep the community safe.

This report supports Council's Strategic Plan 2018-2022 Strategy #2 A Sustainable and Environmentally Conscious City:

Environmentally conscious decision-making that demonstrates leadership in implementing innovative, sustainable practices and supports the City's unique biodiversity and island ecology.

Analysis

When used improperly, anticoagulant rodenticides (rodenticides) are known to enter the local food chain and impact non-targeted wildlife such as birds, insects, and squirrels species. Secondary poisoning can also affect animals such as coyotes, wildcats, and raptors that prey on rodents. Provincial guidelines in BC state that rodenticides are to be used as a last resort when all alternative measures are unsuccessful.

Rodenticide Ban Implementation

There are a number of rodenticide-containing products available in BC to manage rodents, which are licenced under the federal *Pest Control Products Act*, and distributed under the provincial *Integrated Pest Management Act*. Concerns with the industry's overuse of these products led to Council's endorsement of the one-year ban in January 2021 that affected all City-owned property

in Richmond. Following endorsement, staff implemented an integrated pest management program that included:

- **Removing rodenticide** – Bait stations on City-owned property were transitioned from rodenticide, to non-pesticide snap trap devices. Non-humane practices such as glue strips were not utilized. In total, approximately 160 bait stations throughout the city were transitioned. In some cases, it was determined that rodent management services were not necessary. At these locations, pre-existing bait stations appeared to be either non-functioning or abandoned, and were removed.
- **Conducting public property rodent assessments** – Staff conducted a file review, with support from Vancouver Coastal Health, to identify priority areas in Richmond that required consistent rodent management efforts such as the Works Yard, Heritage locations such as the Britannia Shipyards and City Parks. Once identified, staff carried out field assessments, consistent with best practice, to mitigate rodent activities. Simple measures including removing possible food sources, blocking potential egress routes and removing shelter options were employed. More intrusive maintenance work that was noted, such as minor structural deficiencies, overhanging tree branches and uncapped vents were added to the City's regular maintenance programs and addressed, as appropriate, through approved operational budgets.
- **Rodent and compliance monitoring** – Staff evaluated best practices for rodent management and engaged members of the industry, including Qualified Environmental Professionals, Qualified Pest Control Technicians, the BC Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, and other Local Governments to inform monitoring and compliance.
- **Technical working groups** – Technical working groups allow staff to leverage information from other governing bodies and experts working on regional rodent management efforts. Staff are actively participating in regional and provincial technical working groups dedicated to evaluating the use of rodenticides in BC.

The City was successful in transitioning to non-chemical techniques such as snap traps, however, some limitations were identified. The rodent management industry currently has limited options available to replace rodenticide. Snap trap-like products appear to be the only market solution for managing rodents without poison. Other technologies that build upon snap traps and live trapping, have emerged but the effort required to maintain these services on a city-wide scale remains challenging. In addition, staff note that many Certified Pest Control Companies are reluctant to employ alternative methods to manage rodents according to provincial guidelines. Similarly, there are few Qualified Environmental Professionals that are willing to provide rodent management services due to the overlap with pest control companies. Due to timing and resource constraints, staff resorted to monitoring rodent populations through the complaint system that was activated in March 2021, as a result of Vancouver Coast Health's contract termination. Staff continue to note intermittent support for chemical products on private properties in the community, which correlates strongly to each individual's unique experience with, and tolerance for rodents. Complaints ranged from rodent sightings on their private property, to rodent encounters in their general neighborhood surroundings such as gardens or hedgerows.

City Rodent Management Program

The City assumed all general rodent management activities on city-owned and private property from Vancouver Coastal Health in March 2021. Vancouver Coastal Health continued to serve the community for rodent complaints that had possible public health implications including at grocery stores or local restaurants. Staff developed and implemented a community-based initiative that is centered on rodent exclusion techniques, education and stewardship, and customer service. The existing services are consistent with the City's Enhanced Pesticide Management Program and include educational resources, community support, private property assessments and enforcement (Attachment 1).

The rodent management program is an extremely popular program for Richmond residents and feedback continues to be largely positive. Staff can confirm that the number and frequency of complaints aligns with Vancouver Coastal Health's historical annual data. Staff continue to focus on monitoring potential affects of the ban and are actively researching the scale and distribution of rodent populations in Richmond through the distribution of public enquiries (Attachment 2). The data appears to be well-distributed. Notably, central-east Richmond is absent from the data; likely attributed to the higher proportion of agricultural land in the area. Staff also note a high number of complaints throughout the City following a building demolition, which promotes the displacement of rodents at that location, more information below.

Provincial Ban on Rodenticides

The Province enacted an 18-month ban on second generation anticoagulant rodenticides in July, 2021, by Provincial Order. The Order tightens restrictions on the sale and use of second generation rodenticides, calls for a scientific review of second generation anticoagulant rodenticides and establishes exemptions for essential service and agricultural operations. Essential services are defined businesses and services related to preserving life, health, public safety and critical societal functioning. Under this definition, services related to health services, the food industry and transportation industry are exempt from the ban. To purchase second generation anticoagulant rodenticides under the farming operation exemption, a farming operator must be able to provide certification, such as a Farmer Identification Card, to ensure they operate a registered farm. The Province also developed guidance material and established a provincial working group, to which the City has agreed to participate.

Staff acknowledge the Provincial Order is a step in the right direction; however, many industry experts suggest that more is required from the province to support local wildlife and community safety. Municipal staff working group members, the BC Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, and many Richmond residents acknowledge their concern towards the extent of exemptions, provincial enforcement measures and compliance monitoring. Staff also note that the provincial ban, when applicable, only includes restrictions on second generation anticoagulant rodenticides. Other products, including first generation anticoagulant rodenticides, remain available for use and distribution. Little feedback from commercial and industrial stakeholders has been noted following the ban. Staff intend to request that the Province adequately engage this community during the 18-month provincial ban, which is scheduled to end in January 2023. Staff also have plans to consult with Richmond's agricultural community

on this and other sustainability topics in 2022, as per related actions in the City's Ecological Network Management Strategy.

Recommendation and Next Steps

Staff recommend continuing the rodenticide ban on city-owned property, until January 31, 2024, as the Province conducts its scientific review and additional support emerges from the industry including pesticide-free technologies. The additional year beyond the provincial ban also allows staff the appropriate time to review scientific data that is expected from the Province in 2023. Additional monitoring data is also needed to better understand rodent distribution in Richmond. Typical environmental programs of this nature include three to five years of monitoring data to begin to understand trends more effectively. If endorsed, staff intend to build on the City's successes in 2021 and focus on a number of areas to maintain an effective program including monitoring and encouraging opportunities for natural predation (Attachment 3).

Should large infestations of rodents result from this extension, anticoagulants may be required to manage an outbreak. If an infestation is determined to occur, either by a sharp increase in complaints or rodent sightings, these products will only be deployed as needed and under professional supervision to ensure compliance under the provincial regulations. Staff note that this provision was not needed during the 2021 trial period.

Financial Impact

None at this time.

Conclusion

Staff were successful in transitioning the City to non-chemical techniques such as snap traps, although some limitations were identified in 2021. The City's current rodent management program is a popular program for Richmond residents and feedback continues to be largely positive. The Province is currently implementing actions associated with their 18-month ban on select rodenticides in BC. Staff recommend extending the City's ban on all rodenticides until January 31, 2024 as the results of a provincial scientific review emerge and the industry reacts to these changes with more chemical-free management options.



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- Att. 1: Summary of Richmond's Existing Rodent Management Services
- 2: Locations of 2021 Rodent Complaints in Richmond
- 3: Proposed Rodent Management Initiatives

Summary of Richmond's Existing Rodent Management Services Attachment 1

The table below outlines the rodent-related services that the City implemented in the community in 2020.

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| Educational resources | Staff developed Richmond-specific, rodent management content for the City's website that includes an educational video. Staff have also released educational information through various social media outlets including six independent posts in 2021 to promote the City's program and non-chemical solutions for rodent management. |
| Technical support and communication | To support Richmond resident with enquiries, staff modified the City's 24-hour, invasive species hotline to accommodate rodent calls and reports of errant bait stations that are identified. A total of 250 enquiries were addressed in 2021 (April to December). |
| Free private property site assessments | Staff replaced site visits, previously conducted by Vancouver Coastal Health to apply rodenticide, with free exterior assessments on private property. Exterior assessments include an exterior building inspection and pesticide-free advice to help reduce rodent activity such as proper food storage, responsible composting, and bird feeder placement recommendations. A total of 70 private property assessments were conducted in 2021 (April to December). |
| Bylaw enforcement | The City assumed bylaw responsibilities under the Richmond's <i>Public Health Protection Bylaw No. 6989</i> when the Vancouver Coastal Health contract ended. Community feedback in 2021 demonstrated an ardent awareness of the City's pesticide-free initiatives. Of the numerous enquiries logged in 2021, bylaw support was only needed in five cases for unsightly concerns and resolution was achieved in each instance by staff through education and outreach on the matter. |



Legend

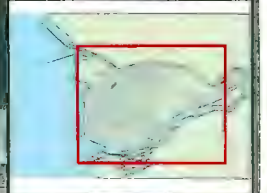
-  Rodent Complaint

Note:
The information shown on this map is compiled from various sources and the City makes no warranties, expressed or implied, as to the accuracy or completeness of the information.
Users are reminded that lot sizes and legal description must be confirmed at the Land Title office in New Westminster.
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Date: 2022-02-01



The table below outlines the rodent-related services that staff intend on implementing to maintain an effective rodent management program in Richmond.

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| <p>Finalize a formal city-specific monitoring program</p> | <p>Staff have been working to establish a unique team of qualified professionals to design and implement a Richmond-specific rodent monitoring program in lieu of existing rodent monitoring standards. Additional effort will also be placed on monitoring the industry’s progress on introducing non-chemical management solutions.</p> |
| <p>Technical support and communication</p> | <p>Staff will continue to monitor the community’s information needs and seek to respond with additional public resources as appropriate. Staff are currently translating existing resource materials for greater accessibility in the community.</p> |
| <p>Environmental enhancement</p> | <p>Increasing opportunities for natural predation remains a key priority for the City to manage rodent populations. Staff will continue to seek habitat enhancement and protection opportunities such as the retention of Barn Owl habitat, through the Ecological Network Management Strategy and development, to encourage the natural predation of rodents in the community.</p> |
| <p>Building demolition assessments</p> | <p>Staff note a high number of rodent complaints following a building demolition. Staff are assessing rodent abatement strategies at the time of building demolition to reduce the likelihood of fleeing rodents.</p> |
| <p>Assess potential for bans on private property</p> | <p>A ban on private property is not considered at this time. The City currently has provisions under the Community Charter to restrict some activities on private property such as the cosmetic use of pesticides. If endorsed, staff will undertake a legal review to understand the City’s ability to ban rodenticides on private property in Richmond. The results would be summarized in a future report for Council’s consideration.</p> |
| <p>Provincial guidance</p> | <p>Staff have identified a need for the rodent management industry to provide alternative solutions to rodenticide. With endorsement, staff will be recommending that the province provide guidance such as incentives, regulation, or information resources for pest control companies to promote alternative technologies and methods to manage rodents.</p> |