

Cholecalciferol

Cholecalciferol, a type of Vitamin D3, is used to poison animals by increasing calcium levels leading to heart and renal failure. Possums and rats that ingest a lethal dose of cholecalciferol typically die within a week. Cholecalciferol-based products do not require a licence to purchase and use.



Above: Feracol® paste in a bait station (left), Feracol® Striker (middle) [Photos: Connovation], and DECAL Possum Bait® in a bait station (right) [Photo: Bionet].

Cholecalciferol baits are used to control possums and rats. Cholecalciferol baits are dyed blue or green to be unattractive to birds, and other non-target species such as domestic pets. Rats and possums prey on native animals and eat the fruit, seeds and leaves of native plants, causing immense damage to our ecosystems and threatening the survival of our taonga species.

Trade names include: DECAL Possum Bait®, Feracol®, Double Tap® (this product also contains diphacinone)

Safe usage

See label instructions for bait deployment. Depending on its form, baits may be deployed in or outside of bait stations. To ensure that it is being used safely always read and follow label instructions for the product you are using. This will generally include:

- Bait must be stored in a dry area away from foodstuffs or food preparation areas
- Bait must be stored in its original container in areas inaccessible to children or pets
- Warning signs must be placed at public accessways to areas where bait stations have been placed
- Bait must be out of reach of children, pets and stock
- Wear suitable protective gear (e.g., gloves) when handling bait
- Do not eat, drink, smoke or vape when handling the bait

- Wash hands after working with bait

Risks

What are the risks to humans?

Treating cholecalciferol poisoning is difficult as, unlike other toxins like diphacinone, pindone, and brodifacoum, there is no antidote. Accordingly, careful handling and preventing accidental consumption is essential. This can be achieved by wearing appropriate personal protective equipment and storing in appropriate areas (see above)

If suspected consumption has occurred, contact **National Poisons Centre 0800 764766** and seek medical advice.

What are the risks to non-target animals?

If label instructions are followed, there is a very low risk of primary poisoning of non-target species. Cholecalciferol can however be a risk to domestic pets if they are able to ingest the toxin directly. Prevention is the only sure way of protecting animals and pest from poisoning. This means:

- Keeping dogs on a lead in area where toxin is being used
- Do not allow pets to scavenge dead animals
- Keeping bait within the bait stations, and not allowing it to fall on the ground
- Safely disposing of dead animals by burying

Dogs and cats are less likely to be poisoned by eating carcasses because the poison breaks down as the possum dies. However, there is still a risk if a dog consumes multiple poisoned carcasses.

If poisoning is suspected in your pet, induce vomiting and seek immediate advice from a vet.

What are the risks to the environment?

Cholecalciferol degrades when exposed to soil, light, and heat, and it is almost insoluble in water. It poses low toxicity to birds and carries a minimal risk of secondary poisoning. Additionally, it does not persist in livestock and wild game animals.

Disposal

Surplus or spoiled bait should be disposed of as per label instructions.

This information sheet has been independently reviewed by

