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In search of a better mousetrap ... sort of

By Julie Sprenghelmeyer
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Make no mistake: James and Linda Blanchard are no fans of mice.

Still, the idea that the furry little critters are being eradicated through the use of chemical-laced baits that essentially blow them up from the inside — toxins that pollute the earth and can sicken or kill owls, hawks, foxes, and other wildlife that feed on the dying rodents — never has sat well with the couple.

So they started working on it. James Blanchard looked to his 15-plus years in pest management and prior career in food service to create a recipe that would be kinder to the environment — and the mice, rats, and voles it would target, too — while still having the desired outcome.

Several years of experimenting and several hundred wild and

domesticated mice later, the two have produced what he calls a “green” formula, one that relies on oleander, lily flowers, hemlock roots, and lily of the valley berries to induce a coma-like state.

Rather than bleeding to death through the use of a chemical anticoagulant, “a very slow and painful death,” Blanchard notes, the rodents have heart failure, stroke, or simply fall into a coma. He refined the recipe so it’s just strong enough to eradicate rodents and, he hopes, wouldn’t affect larger birds of prey and wildlife.

He stresses that will need further study, however, as his experiments didn’t extend to wildlife, of course. More clear is that the natural components of the mix won’t pollute the water and the ground, Blanchard said recently at the couple’s home in Enfield.

“A rodent will generally die within 12 to 36 hours after ingesting the composition, which does not in-



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James and Linda Blanchard of Enfield are working on a more humane way to dispose of nuisance rodents. While their all-natural bait is patented, they’ve been running into snags securing approval from the federal Food and Drug Administration.

clude any chemicals or additives that are damaging to the environment,” he says.

They’ve gone so far as to patent the mix — U.S. Patent No. 8,257,757B1, to be exact.

That hard-won patent hangs framed on the wall, representing three years of tests and investigation, a few tweaks to make the recipe more specific, and a hefty dose of the Blanchards’ “can-do” attitude and passion for the idea. “It’s good for mother earth and for

humanity, and that’s huge,” Linda Blanchard says.

But that shiny patent they worked so patiently to secure is gathering dust on the wall because they can’t get regulatory approval for their rodenticide.

The sticking point? Peanut butter.

Keeping on track

Peanut butter is the binding agent central to the Blanchards’ mix, but will trigger reactions in people with an allergy to the sub-

stance. Linda Blanchard says peanut butter attracts mice and keeps the mix together, and the bait would be secured in a locked station just as chemical rodenticides are. In fact, they’d partner with a bait station maker, not wishing to “reinvent the wheel,” her husband says.

While U.S. Environmental Protection Agency officials maintain the agency doesn’t ban the use

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Looking for kinder, gentler mouse disposal

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of peanut butter in rodenticides, the Blanchards are testing other binding agents — they think they’ve got a found option with sunflower butter — that are sticky enough to keep the bait together.

In the long run, though, “we need the government to have green legislation on rodenticides,” James Blanchard says. He notes that while the EPA has banned from store shelves some agents — including certain anticoagulants (which remain available commercially and for agricultural use) — its approved chemicals still are toxic.

Kasha Breau, a teacher/naturalist and wildlife specialist at the Connecticut Audubon Society Center in Glastonbury, can’t speak to the Blanchards’ efforts. But she says the effects of secondary rodenticide poisoning are clear, most often in urban areas such as Hartford where mice and rats generally abound. The poison not only affects birds but pets and feral cats as well. It’s hard to watch a bird that volunteers believe has eaten a poisoned rodent, she says.

“They shake and shiver, and their limbs start to do strange things as they die. It’s horrible,” Breau says.

And that’s a problem not only in Connecticut, but across the U.S. With that in mind, the Blanchards approached top bait companies with their natural mix, but say they got the same response: “They don’t need the product because they’ve got it all covered,” Linda Blanchard says.

Still, the two remain undeterred, working any angle they can find to get their product approved and dis-



James and Linda Blanchard with a copy of their patent. The couple has come up with a recipe to rid houses and buildings of mice and other vermin.

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tributed. Their mantra? “Always follow your dreams. Stay focused, be positive, and always be honest.”

The mouse professionals

While hoping for EPA approval and working on another binder, the Blanchards also continue to work on mice.

The couple owns and operates Green Mouse Guard, a business that guarantees to “mouse-proof” most homes and businesses.

Linda Blanchard says her husband is the best in the business, locating all areas where mice are entering a structure, in part by finding any holes or cracks in a home and identifying the oily substance on their fur the mice leave behind. She’s no slouch, either — she goes out on trips and helps seek out and stop up entrance points.

Their yellow business card features a drawing of a disgruntled-looking mouse carrying a suitcase and pays homage to their moonlighting gig as inventor with “owner/entrepreneur” printed under James Blanchard’s name.

It costs a few hundred dollars to

mouse-proof a house, depending on its size. The Blanchards will determine where the mice are coming in, then patch any holes to stymie the rodents the next time they try to visit. They warn that mice can enter the tiniest of holes — if they can poke their heads through, their narrow bodies will follow. That’s mostly in the spring and fall, when they’re seeking warmth or (gasp) a place to nest.

After a mouse-proofing job, homeowners simply set up a few traps to catch any stragglers, the Blanchards say. They’ll repeat the service if the problem persists, but say that’s rarely the case. Mouse-proofing, as opposed to bait, eliminates the need to continue paying for a service because it solves the problem, they add.

James Blanchard says he can mouse-proof most anything, with possibly the exception of a mobile home because it lacks a solid foundation. Yet when the two move to East Hartford, it will be to — where else? — a neat little mobile home in a complex off Main Street.

They’re working on it, he promises with a smile.

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A better mouse poison

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