

(Continued)

## Helping you improve your harvesting

This year's crush is well underway but with harvesting still to continue for another three months it's important to get it right.

Research by SRA's engineering division has shown that not using best practices – such as reducing harvester fanspeed and managing bin weights – could cause financial losses over \$1000 per hectare.

To help growers we will be conducting demonstrations in the NSW region to showcase the economic benefits of Harvesting Best Practice (HBP).

At the demonstrations you can learn more about the changes you can make during harvesting to reduce losses.



**4-11 September 2013  
New South Wales**

You will also have the opportunity to see first-hand a prototype mobile system that accurately measures sugar loss in the field.

To register to attend a demonstration, contact Phil Patane, Development Officer – Harvesting, SRA on 0431 818 482.

## Are you rat ready?

*Phil Ross*  
Development Officer – Weed and Pest Management  
Professional Extension and Communication Unit



Cane growers are allowed to bait for rats from 1 October through to 30 June. However, there are a few things you need to consider in managing rats.

The rats that cause most damage to cane, the ground rat (*Rattus sordidus*) and climbing rat (*Melomys burtoni*), are both native mammals and are protected under the *Nature*

*Conservation Act 1992*. Baits may be used as part of a management program under the conditions of an industry-wide Damage Mitigation Permit, issued by the Department of Environment and Heritage Protection.

**For the cane industry to maintain this permit, it is important that growers meet the following requirements.**

> Before baiting, provide details of blocks to be baited and the species targeted. You can do this in two ways:

1. Provide details to your local productivity service company, or
  2. Go to the website [www.hcpsl.com](http://www.hcpsl.com), then to Prod Services Groups section, then to the Rat Monitoring Program for all Prod Services Groups. You will find an Excel spreadsheet where you can enter your baiting details. You will need to download it to your own computer, and email it back to your own productivity service company after filling in details. Growers in all regions are able to use it.
- > Bait only between 1 October and 30 June.

> For in-crop baiting, both Racumin® applied in bait stations or Rattoff® may be used, as directed by the product label.

> The only non-crop harborage areas permitted for baiting are manufactured infrastructure and in these areas, only Racumin® in bait stations may be used.

Baiting is only one component of a rat management program and, ideally, neighbours should work together to manage them.

Rats cannot reproduce on a diet of sugarcane only. Males and females need the protein in grass and weed seed to maximise their reproductive capacity.

**To prevent rat numbers from exploding:**

- > Reduce the initial numbers of rats recolonising blocks after harvest.
- > Prevent reproduction.

**This can be achieved by the following methods:**

- > Eliminate weeds in cane fields. No weeds = no seeds = no protein = no breeding.
- > Manage non-crop harborage areas to eliminate suitable cover and weed seeds.
- > Encourage natural predation by owls by retaining habitat trees in remnant vegetation.
- > Bait strategically to reduce the rat population – before they breed.

*Baiting by itself is unlikely to control rats!*

To provide rat baiting details, regardless of where you farm visit:

[www.hcpsl.com](http://www.hcpsl.com)

Click PROD SERV. GRPS and follow instructions

The screenshot shows the HCPSSL website interface. At the top, it says 'HCPSSL Servicing the Herbert sugar industry'. On the left is a green navigation menu with items like HOME PAGE, SERVICES, UPCOMING EVENTS, VARIETIES, FACT SHEETS, HARVEST MGMT, PRECISION AG, PROJECTS, PROD SERV. GRPS, and CONTACTS. The main content area includes a 'MISSION STATEMENT' section with bullet points: 'A not for profit company, limited by guarantee' and 'Funded by voluntary membership from the Herbert cane industry'. Below this is a table titled 'Current HCPSSL Board Members' with names and roles: Roy Pace (Chairman), John Pratt (Deputy Chairman), Peter Allen, Ian Davies, Michael Waring, and Michael Reinaudo. On the right side, there are links for 'Week 6 WILMAR Crush Report', 'PRESS RELEASE', 'Managers Report June, 2013', and 'May Newsletter to all HBT Growers'.



**Left:** Ground rat damage at the base of stalks.

**Right:** Climbing rat damage about 1 to 1.5 m above ground.

