



Southern Queensland farmers report an influx of mice, following recent severe storms

ABC Rural

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PHOTO: Mice can cause serious damage to both sorghum and corn crops at this stage of the year. (Supplied: Julianne Farrell)

Mice have been detected in higher numbers on Queensland's central Darling Downs and with a big summer cropping program underway there's plenty for the rodents to chew on.

And in a cruel twist they've mostly been seen in an area on the central Darling Downs that sustained storm damage just before Christmas.

Rodent biologist Julianne Farrell said the damaged grain on the ground had attracted the mice and farmers could certainly tell if they were in their crops.

"Very damaging, particularly after the hail storm which would have damaged a lot of the crops," she said.

"It laid a lot of grain on the ground, which makes life very easy for the mice as a food source.

"That will continue on through winter as an assured food source and breeding may carry on, for longer than it normally would."

Ms Farrell said the damaged grain on the ground would probably sustain the animal's population well into winter and baiting measures should be considered.

"As zinc phosphide is so expensive it's up to individual growers to make a decision whether they can justify the cost of baiting so close to harvest."

One grain grower who has baited already is Chris Higton who farms near Bongeen near Cecil Plains on the Darling Downs.

Mr Higton said he was seeing big numbers of mice targeting his corn crop.

"Well what they're doing, the sneaky little toads, is they're going through the row and they'll dig down beside the seedling and chew the seed up and then move on to the next one up the row and they'll do three or four or five in a row," he said.

Mr Higton said that prompted him to embark on a control program as he estimated the cost of baiting to be less than the losses he would sustain if he let the mice ransack his crop.

"The best thing to do is to put some Mouse-Off out of an aeroplane and see if you can clean them up enough so that they stop doing it," he said.

"It's a case that you have to really, because if you lose 5 or 10 per cent of your actual plant population, you're going to lose 5 or 10 per cent of your actual yields at the other end — it's a small cost per hectare to do it to try and save your plants."