

# Trapped

When it comes to pest control in the country, not all states are equal. Varying rules and differing local requirements create an operational challenge for national operators.

BY PHIL TAYLOR



**A**s environmental scrutiny increases and workplace safety standards evolve, toxic rodent bait use in Australian facilities is coming under greater regulatory scrutiny than ever. From hospitals and schools to warehouses and factories, facility managers face tougher questions about how pest control programs are implemented, documented and monitored.

Rodent pressure is common, but compliance standards are anything but consistent. States differ on licensing, environmental protection, bait restrictions and reporting. Some jurisdictions are moving toward integrated pest management (IPM), while others still lean on traditional baiting with limited oversight.

I put some of these questions to Samuel Wood from Bell Laboratories, who brings a research-driven perspective to the industry.

On common misconceptions facility managers have about compliance, Wood explains, "One is that all toxic baits are now banned. That's not the case—the regulations now prevent the permanent use of second-generation anticoagulants, so they must be used in a limited, targeted way."

"Another is that simply switching to first-generation products lets facilities continue with the same program as before. What changes really do is highlight the importance of a professional pest manager, who runs an ongoing risk assessment and adjusts treatment—not just checks and replaces bait."

## WHY COMPLIANCE MATTERS

Rodent baiting has historically been treated as routine maintenance. But regulators are increasingly focused on the secondary impacts of toxic bait—second-generation anticoagulant rodenticides (SGARs) in particular, due to their persistence in the environment and risk to non-target wildlife, pets and children if mismanaged.

Poor bait management also exposes organisations to reputational, safety and liability risks. The conversation has shifted from 'controlling pests' toward demonstrating accountable, traceable and environmentally responsible practices.

From what I see across audits, the most common compliance failures aren't about pest activity itself—they're documentation gaps and unresolved recommendations: incomplete records, unactioned advice, poor housekeeping, waste issues, proofing deficiencies, no trend analysis or corrective action.

Often, the issue has been flagged, but not followed through. The best outcomes happen when facility managers and providers tackle underlying causes together, not just symptoms.

Below is a snapshot of key states and territories in the country and their approaches to rodent control.

## NEW SOUTH WALES: LEADING THE PUSH TOWARD ACCOUNTABILITY

NSW is one of the more proactive states in terms of compliance. In food production, healthcare and government facilities, documentation, licensing and reporting, standards have become far more rigorous over the past decade.

The biggest change I've seen in NSW over five years is the rise in expectations around compliance and accountability. Five years ago, most organisations just wanted evidence that a service had been completed.

Today, clients and auditors expect accuracy, site-specific risk assessments, trend analysis and documented follow-ups. It's no longer enough to identify an issue; providers must understand the cause and help implement and monitor a plan.

Compliance has become more sophisticated, with a stronger focus on risk reduction and demonstrable outcomes, helped by better reporting systems, data analytics and monitoring tools.

## VICTORIA: ENVIRONMENTAL PRESSURES AND OPERATIONAL TRADE-OFFS

Victoria has seen increased scrutiny, particularly around wildlife protection. Environmental groups and councils have pushed operators to minimise unnecessary SGAR use, especially in metro areas where secondary poisoning risks are more visible.

I asked Wood whether Victoria has struck the right balance.

"There are no regulations in Victoria that differ from the rest of the country on environmental protection. But Victoria does have more restrictive animal welfare rules—namely, a complete ban on glue traps," Wood explains.

"From a welfare perspective, that makes sense. There's an argument they were overused, but they're also an important tool Victorian pest managers have lost."

## WESTERN AUSTRALIA: SCALE, DISTANCE AND OPERATIONAL PRESSURES

WA's scale and the diversity of facilities across remote and metro locations create unique challenges. Mining camps, logistics hubs and remote infrastructure sites often need highly adaptable strategies due to extreme climates and isolated conditions.

"Geography is the biggest challenge—it affects operations more than compliance, but the scale of the state versus the population makes everything harder outside metro areas," Wood says.

"Supply continuity, technician availability and response times are all more difficult in remote and regional areas."

### NORTHERN TERRITORY: HIGH PEST PRESSURE, LIMITED OVERSIGHT

In the NT, climatic conditions create year-round pest pressure, especially in food storage, hospitality and accommodation facilities. This is compounded by limited oversight in some areas, leading to inconsistent contractor standards and heavier reliance on baiting over broader IPM frameworks.

### THE RISE OF IPM ACROSS AUSTRALIA

One of the most significant industry shifts is the move toward integrated pest management prioritising prevention, monitoring and environmental management before chemical intervention.

"The industry has been talking about IPM for years, but not really practising it," Wood notes.

"Expectations from clients, certification bodies and regulators are changing, making IPM more central to service programs. It requires more active involvement from the facility itself, which is an adjustment for many, but it has really positive outcomes for both the environment and the facility."

### WHY NATIONAL CONSISTENCY MATTERS

One of the biggest frustrations for national operators is the lack of consistency across state-based frameworks. A contractor managing sites across New South Wales, Victoria and Western Australia can face entirely different expectations on documentation and reporting.

My view is that the state-by-state differences are more about technician licensing and animal welfare rules than standards per se. It would be more straightforward if every state worked to the same licensing rules, but best practices are best practices regardless of location. The Australian Environmental Pest Managers Association (AEPMA) has published industry Codes of Practice that can be complied with nationwide.

### THE FUTURE OF TOXIC BAIT COMPLIANCE

As environmental expectations rise, facilities are judged not just on pest control, but on how responsibly it's achieved.

I believe the sector is moving toward stronger accountability – more documentation, clearer justification of treatment decisions and better evidence of risk reduction. It's a shift from reactive approaches toward structured, outcome-focused programs that track causes, trends and corrective actions.

Wood agrees that regulatory change is already reshaping how baiting programs are designed and justified, with SGAR restrictions pushing facilities toward more targeted application and stronger reliance on professional input and site-specific risk assessment.

Together, our view is clear: toxic bait use is becoming less about routine application, and more about demonstrating that every decision is considered, justified and supported by a broader pest management strategy. ●

*Phil Taylor is the CEO of Pest2Kill.*

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