Anticoagulants live to fight another day

The European Parliament’s Committee on Environment, Public Health and Food Safety (ENVI) recently voted on a motion which had the potential to affect significantly the pest control industry across the whole of Europe. Dr Alan Buckley of The University of Reading outlines what’s been going on and what some of the implications are for rodent control in the UK.

As most within the industry will be aware, if the ENVI committee vote had gone the way some MEPs wanted, anticoagulant rodenticides would have been removed from the market. Thanks to extensive lobbying by the pest control industry and associated allies, common sense prevailed and anticoagulants live to fight another day.

The ENVI Committee is the principal body of MEPs which debates and proposes policy on biocides. As such, it is extremely influential in deciding what pest control products are available in the EU and how they can be used.

On 22 June the Committee voted on the proposal for a new EU Biocidal Products Regulation (BPR), put forward by the German MEP Kristo Klass. This will replace the old Biocidal Products Directive. The Committee had to vote on no fewer than 567 amendments to Klass’s draft, so members had their work cut out!

One of the most controversial sections of the BPR voted on was Article 5. If this Article had gone through without amendment the use of anticoagulant rodenticides would have been severely curtailed and actually banned in many important areas of current use.

In effect, anticoagulants could only have been used in cases where there was a ‘serious danger to public health’. This would have ruled out a wide range of essential activities, most notably in animal health and hygiene and to prevent damage to property and installations.

Vigorous lobbying pays off

A vigorous campaign of lobbying of MEPs was organised in the UK, supported by magazines such as Pest, with the British Pest Control Association (BPCA) and the National Pest Technicians Association (NPTA) at the forefront.

There is no doubt that the campaign had a major effect on the outcome of the vote.

Thanks to the fact that they were fully briefed on the potential adverse impacts of the draft BPR on pest control, UK MEPs were among the most active during discussions before the vote.

Chris Davies (Liberal Democrat MEP for the North West of England) organised a meeting of stakeholders, with the pest control industry represented, which explored the problems of the draft BPR wording.

Julie Girling (Conservative MEP for South West England) told the ENVI Committee about growing-up on a farm and said that rodent control with anticoagulants was an essential part of farm hygiene. Ms Girling tabled a key amendment to the BPR draft.

Jim Nicolson (Ulster Unionist MEP for Northern Ireland) weighed in with “without rodenticides the only protection against rats would be the Pied Piper” and Stuart Stevenson (Conservative MEP for Scotland) was so impressed with representations from pest controllers that he felt it his duty to highlight concerns in Brussels.

A dazzling selection of DIY products. But if the EU gets its way, domestic use anticoagulant rodenticides may become a thing of the past.