

Rejection of Dyed Field Rodent Baits by Feral Pigeons and Chukar Partridges

S. Moran¹

Whole wheat grain bait, treated with sodium fluoroacetate, is used to control field rodents in Israel. However, this bait constitutes a potential primary non-target hazard to seed-eating birds. In the present study black-, red-, green- and yellow-dyed whole wheat and sorghum grains, as well as undyed ones, were offered to feral pigeons, *Columba livia*, and to chukar partridges, *Alectoris chukar*, in the laboratory during 4 days. Grains were offered either piled on trays, or scattered. Consumption levels varied significantly ($P < 0.05$) among varieties. The pigeons preferred undyed grain; black and yellow grains were consumed the least. The partridges preferred the undyed and black grains to all the other colored grains. When no undyed alternative was offered, the pigeons preferred red and green, and the partridges – black wheat. The pigeons preferred wheat whole grain, and the partridges - sorghum whole grain. When the pigeons received sorghum, a disliked grain, no significant difference ($P > 0.05$) was observed in the consumption of the differently dyed grains.

KEY WORDS: Dye aversion; field rodent bait; secondary hazards; *Columba livia*; feral pigeons; *Alectoris chukar*; chukar partridges.

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¹Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development, Plant Protection and Inspection Services, Bet Dagan 50250, Israel [Fax: +972-3-9681507; e-mail: ppis@netvision.net.il].