

Rats and Mice and Varmints, Oh My!

... continued from page D1



Mario Martinez of All N One Pest Eliminators looks for rodent entry points at a house in Lafayette, where the owners have been experiencing more mice and rat problems than usual. Photo Chris Lavin

“When we bought this house seven years ago, we had a contractor shore up the concrete foundation,” he said. Martinez nodded. “Well, it didn’t go down far enough,” Martinez said. The answer from the homeowner was: “Obviously.”

With the drought, the problem has gotten only worse. Any trap the homeowner sets in his utility room gets snapped that night, he said.

“We just had to call in the troops,” he said. Recently the homeowner got called out of town on a business trip, and couldn’t check the traps the next morning. That, he said, led to a situation he could not describe for print. It involved larval things.

Now that rodents and other critters are looking for cooler places and more water, more homeowners are turning to pest control companies for help. Yet there are many things a homeowner can do him or herself.

- 1) Get under the sink and refrigerator, if you have an ice machine, and block up the gaps with steel wool between the water and gas pipes where rats and mice can get up into the cabinets.
- 2) Walk the perimeter of your house, checking where the foundation meets the house itself. If there are gaps, pour concrete to fill them or have a contractor do it for you.
- 3) Set traps and check them daily after resolving the perimeter issue until the rodents don’t visit.

When shown a photo of a trapped wood rat in a live-trap cage, Martinez shook his head. “You’re one of those people, eh?” he asked, referring to forced relocation efforts of small mammals that should be allowed to exist, in some people’s opinions. After all, rodents could consider the influx of human habitation into their territory an infestation problem, not the other way around.

“Yeah, I guess it’s all how you look at it,” Martinez said.

Drought Causes Rise in Feral Cat Populations

By Chris Lavin



An unusual spike in abandoned kittens has Pet Food Express volunteers bottle-feeding kittens such as these until they are ready for adoption. Photo provided

Maybe it’s a yin and yang thing, but the drought that is causing more rodents to come into houses has also caused a rise in feral cat populations. That’s according to Mike Murray of Pet Food Express, who is the director of community outreach for all the Bay Area locations of the store.

“People are finding a lot of kittens out there,” Murray said. “Kitten season should be done by now. But kitten season is getting longer and longer. We’re still getting kittens. It’s going to go to the end of August.”

The influx of abandoned kittens brought into stores has increased this year, Murray said. “We don’t know if it’s because people find a kitten and the mother has just gone out to find food, or whether it’s abandoned. But the drought is definitely a factor, one way or another.”

In response, Pet Food Express outlets accept abandoned kittens, but is in need of bottle-feeder volunteers who can accept a kitten that has not been weaned. One former employee came up with a pre-weaned-kitten-bottle-feeder kit, which is a big seller, Murray said. “It gets the kitten to the point where it’s eligible age for adoption. Shelters can’t handle them until they are weaned.” He notes that only a few kits sold in the first weeks they were available, and now the stores have recently been selling hundreds.

“We don’t know if it’s the warm weather or the drought,” Murray said. “We just have a lot of kittens out there.”

To become a home-bottle volunteer visit www.eastbayspca.org/fostering or www.co.contra-costa.ca.us/839/Foster-Program.