



The Nantucket Maria Mitchell Association's Policy Statement On Rodenticide

Since 2001, the Nantucket Maria Mitchell Association (MMA) has been committed to the protection, support, and research of the Barn Owl (*Tyto alba*), a species of special concern in Massachusetts. With its Barn Owl Program, the MMA works to understand more about their abundance, reproduction, distribution, and dispersal; however, we also attempt to educate others about their benefits to controlling rodent populations, which in turn reduces the impact of Lyme Disease and other rodent carried tick illnesses on Nantucket.

A sizable proportion of the Massachusetts barn owl population is found on Nantucket and Martha's Vineyard, with little emigration from or immigration to the islands. As a result, there is an increased need to protect this species, which is a significant part of the MMA's mission. Despite the efforts of the Barn Owl Program to help provide habitat and spaces for safe breeding across the island, there are human-caused threats to this species that we must call attention to.

One of the most serious threats is secondary poisoning, which affects barn owls, hawks, and other raptors, as well as domesticated animals. When rodents consume rodenticides and are later eaten by predators, the rodenticide accumulates in the predators' systems, often resulting in serious health risks or death. The most effective way to reduce this risk on Nantucket is to avoid using rodenticides as a form of pest control. Instead, we encourage following the suggestions of Mass Audubon in poison-free pest control methods:

- Exclude rodents by sealing holes in exterior surfaces and blocking any space a rodent may be able to enter a home through.
- Removing food sources for rodents makes your home a less favorable space for them to live.
- Using safer control methods, when necessary, such as snap-traps or rodent contraceptives, which are more humane and targeted alternatives.

As outlined by Mass Audubon and Mass.gov, these approaches are effective and safer for local wildlife. By making the choice to avoid rodenticides, we can help protect Nantucket wildlife and ensure that the barn owl remains a vital part of our island ecosystem in future generations.