

Rodent IPM Notes from Peter Martinelli

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Experienced vegetable farmer Peter Martinelli at Fresh Run Farm in Bolinas kindly shared some helpful rodent IPM (Integrated Pest Management) tips based on his own experience through a phone interview in January 2024.

Sanitation

Peter recommends keeping areas clean and open to make it more difficult for rodents to get to your crop. You can isolate the crop area by cleaning down grassy areas to encourage raptors. Rodents hate crossing open ground, so it's a natural deterrent. If you can have a few feet between blocks and rows, it can help.

Trapping

His preferred trap is the cinch style trap because he finds them to be very effective if you place them correctly. He uses the Gonzo trap which is a cinch style trap that you can find at Harmony. Be sure to choose a hole where rodents are already working. Cinch traps come in three sizes so you might want mostly middle-sized traps plus a couple of big ones. Be sure to anchor your traps: if you go to a pet store or the pet aisle in a grocery store, you can find a metal corkscrew tie-down stake that people use to tie down a dog leash into the soil—these are affordable and can help make sure a predator doesn't run away with your trap. This is more convenient than carrying around heavy objects to keep traps in place.

Encouraging Natural Predators

Fresh Run Farm is located next to a forested area and there are already a lot of owls on the property such as screech owls, great horned owls, and barn owls. He makes perches for hawks every 75 feet or so which encourages hawks to hangout where sparrows eat greens. He has seen herons and egrets from the nearby coastal area move through the farm and eat gophers.

Resources

You can learn more about rodent IPM through the UC IPM website:

<https://ipm.ucanr.edu/index.html>

Peter encourages growers to check out the Wild Farm Alliance Resources—they're free and open to the public! Here is their website: <https://www.wildfarmalliance.org/resources>

You can hear more from Peter here through this interview with the Wild Farm Alliance:

https://www.wildfarmalliance.org/peter_martinelli_fresh_run_farm