

Statement on Rodent Plague

We have received a number of concerned enquiries regarding the impact of the current mouse plague that is afflicting farmers in Northern NSW and Southern QLD.

Mice in rural areas

Mice are common in rural areas and like many other animals, are affected by weather. In the drier, cooler months mouse activity naturally increases, while summer heat and high rainfall tend to lessen mouse numbers. However recent bumper crop harvests in the NSW region provided extra fodder for mice. Add to this the mild summer weather and the loss of natural predators, due to 2017-2019 drought and recent fires, and the result is that mice populations have been able to reproduce rapidly – to the point where they've reached plague proportions. While crop yields were lower over the Queensland Downs regions, similar conditions with weather and predators have enabled increases in the numbers of mice.

Mice and grain crops

Most growers in Northern NSW and Southern QLD have been affected by the current mice plague. Whilst concern is warranted about the possible contamination from mice in grain the possibility is, in fact, very low. The majority of damage caused by mice occurs in the field where they run up to the stalks and bite the heads (grains) off the cereal crops. This constitutes a loss in yield not quality. Current planted crop could be affected by the fact that mice will dig up and eat the seed after it is planted. Once again this will lead to poor germination rate and therefore lower yields, but it will not result in contamination.

Organic farming and grains received at Kialla Pure Foods

Organic farmers and the Kialla facility have always had protocols in place to prevent any contamination from mice populations. Organic farmers use physical barriers and traps for mice on their farms, and other [Allowable Organic Inputs](#) for pest control. Their grain is tested and inspected on receipt for any contamination. Before processing it is further sieved and graded. Our strict HACCP protocols apply to any grains that are processed for food products.

Protocols to prevent mice contamination at Kialla Pure Foods

We have only seen a small increase in mice activity around the facility and maintain our usual pest control measures, which have always been very stringent. As a Certified Organic Food Safe processor, we are prohibited from using poisons within the factory. Kialla Pure Foods has a number of pest control measures in place to combat rodents around the factory premises, as well as within the facility. These include rodent barriers, rodent repellents, electric pads at entrances to the factory, sticky pads within the factory, mice trappers on outside facility walls, and slide-in barrier doors fitted in front of the cold rooms to prevent mice crossing through the doors.

In addition to the general maintenance of good plant hygiene, we do visual inspections of all product before dispatching. Thus, we are actively working to prevent any mice issues within the factory.