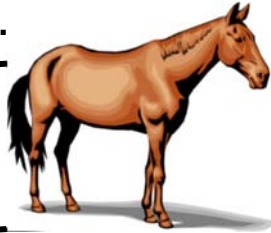


Notes from....



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One of the lasting legends from the middle ages is that of the Pied Piper. This character with his magic flute was able to rid the town of the rat infestation that was plaguing it. In the story, he makes a financial agreement that should he be successful in ridding the town of this plague, the mayor would compensate him. Then he plays his magic flute, in which all the rats follow him into the nearby river and drown. So



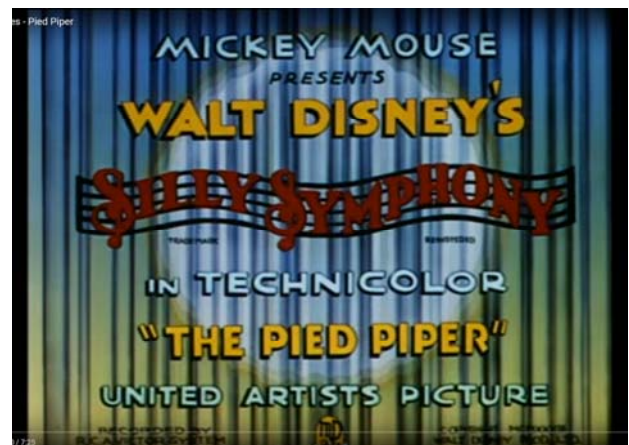
why would the mayor want to pay for the removal of rats; those cute, cuddly creatures? Tales come and go, but why does the Pied Piper remain alive after 800+ years?

Around the time that the Pied Piper story arose, the Black Plague was



raging in Europe where an estimated 30-60% of the human population died. While not knowing exactly why rodents posed a danger, intuitively, the then population sensed that rats and mice were unsafe. The Mayor of Hamelin conjectured that if it were possible to rid the town of rodents, the population would be safer.

For those that lean towards learning your history through cartoons, Disney offers a nice interpretation sans



drowning:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UXOCHn7Vfec>

Since then, for centuries rodents are seen as posing two distinct threats to human populations. First as disease carriers, (we now know as hantavirus, e-coli, leptospira, etc.) and secondly as spoilers of stored food (which can lead to starvation.)

Only very recently have rodents begun to transform into lovable characters such as Jerry of Tom & Jerry, Mighty Mouse, and lately Remi the Rat from *Ratatouille*. So after 800 years, how do we now have rodent characters that are adorable, when heretofore they were seen as the carriers of death and destruction? It may be so for the modern urban dweller; rats are magically whisked away by a new Pied Piper wearing the colors of various pest control companies. By exchanging flutes for traps and poison baits, the urbanite can live in a world removed from the dangers of rats and mice.

In parts of the developing world such as India, there is a class of laborer who works at night for the sole purpose of killing rats. In a recent Reuter's article, 44 rat killers are employed by a single company. They are each given a flashlight and stick, and are required to kill at least 30 rodents each per night. They receive the equivalent of 10 cents per rat. In a country dominated by poverty, this is the most economical means of extermination for this food processing facility. In the developed world, no one would work for such low wages. So rather than using sticks and flashlights, we



use a variety of traps, both mechanical and chemical as well as beneficial enemies (cats, hawks, coyotes, etc.) to control rodents.

The money behind Remi the Rat is Disney. Ironically, while an adorable rat may make them big money on theater screens, waves of Remi's running through the kitchens and rides of Disneyland would create a huge revulsion and drive down attendance at the park. Disney's answer is to allow over 200 feral cats to scour the park at night to search out and kill all the Remi's so that the daytime guests can have their idealized experience.

For decades, rat poison was the preferred method of controlling rats and mice in the U.S. Rather than a worker running around at night with a stick, he or she can now "hunt" entire buildings by using the poison bait stations. Until 2014 these poisons were available to all consumers to purchase. Recent research of wildlife mortalities has determined that a great number of wildlife deaths was from eating poisoned rodents. Thus in 2014, the sale of these poisons was restricted to only licensed professionals. The belief being that licensed applicators would have the proper knowledge to kill rodents, but minimize the impact on wildlife.

As we all know, rats proliferate at stables. Modern (post 2014) rodent control is based on a technique known as Integrated Pest management. SCR, and all other stables are expected to follow the IPM plan to control rodents.

Level #1- Sanitation:

The first step is to practice proper sanitation. In our case, that means not spilling grains and other feeds that are hoovered up by the nighttime rats. This is wishful thinking and is unlikely to have any effect on the rodent population.

Level #2- Encourage Predators

We have also tried to control the rodent control by encouraging beneficial (for us, not rats) predators. We brought in feral cats to

control rodents using the Disneyland model. These cats were scheduled to be euthanized if a home wasn't found for them, as it is nearly impossible to adopt out a feral cat. Unfortunately, a few boarders insisted on feeding the cats, so their desire to hunt was eliminated. Even when we politely spoke with these few "feeders," we were told in no uncertain terms that these folks would do what they want! Sadly, we have had to abandon this plan.

Level #3- Trapping

Finding ourselves slowly inching towards the Indian model of rodent control, we then began a program of setting out snap traps. Each day one of our employees spent a sizable chunk of his day removing caught rats, and then re-setting the trap for the upcoming night. This method of control represented a significant labor cost. But based on both the letter and spirit of the new wildlife preservation law, we were trying to do our best. Amazingly, we encountered opponents of this process as well! Because it was too uncomfortable for them to see either the set traps or rats that had not yet been removed from the traps, a few boarders began a campaign of walking around and springing the traps so rats wouldn't be killed, as well as throwing the traps in the trash.

Level #4- Poisoning

We are now forced to resort to using rat poison as a means of control. Gone are days of having SCR staff run to home depot to buy bait, then putting it out the same day. Under the new law, the ability to put out poison is very prescribed both in who can purchase as well as who can put it out. Now one must be a State of California licensed applicator. Not possessing the proper license would expose the stable to large fines under the new 2014 law. Given that SCR is an open facility, we always operate the stable as if we are going to be inspected by any agency, for any reason. We have made the decision become a licensed pest control operator to be able to reduce the rat population legally.

Looking for a fun way to bolster my LinkedIn profile, I have studied and passed the Department of Pesticide Regulation- Private Applicators Examination. Now I am be able to purchase the proper rodenticide and begin reducing the rat population. Before this can

begin, however we had to purchase a \$700 lockable, fireproof rodenticide cabinet, as well as install proper signage. Next we then must develop a plan of rodenticide distribution and be personally inspected by the Agricultural Commissioner on our first effort. After that each time we move the bait stations, are again required to notify the County of Orange Agricultural Commissioner. You will also receive notification by email for each control effort.

Pending approval and passing all the above, the plan is to divide the stable into three sectors, and heavily bait a sector for a short time. Then move to the next. Again State and Federal laws require us to notify both the County Agricultural Commissioner as well as all boarders and employees each time we move our bait stations. Expect to receive an extensive notification with each effort.

Thank you for your understand as we begin to implement this practice.

