



17th March 2016

Press Release

Marlborough Facebook otter found poisoned

It was revealed today that a dead otter found by Action for the River Kennet (ARK) by the River Kennet in Marlborough was poisoned.

Toxicology testing confirmed Riverside Veterinary Centre's initial investigation that the otherwise healthy male otter had been the victim of rat poison. The 'dog' otter had suffered an acute bleed into the stomach and traces of the rodenticide Brodifacoum were found in his liver. Brodifacoum is extremely toxic to all mammals and is legally only certified for indoor use. This is a very aggressive single feed poison.

Two days before the otter's death he had become a minor celebrity after a photograph of it posted on ARK's Facebook page feeding on fish was viewed more than 12,500 times.

ARK's Stonebridge project officer Anna Forbes said 'With only 2,000 otters in England it is terrible to think of them needlessly dying. Every year wild animals like otters and domestic pets like cats and dogs are killed by rat poison used recklessly or incorrectly. This particular poison is at least 50 x more dangerous to dogs compared to some other rat poisons.'

Rats are a problem in many areas and ARK understand the need to control them, but urges anyone using rat poison to read the label and use bait boxes with the legal and appropriate bait, and not place them close to the river.

Otter populations have declined catastrophically over the last 20 years because of pollution including organo-chlorine pesticides and habitat destruction as riverside areas are drained and cleared. Stonebridge Wild River Reserve provides an important protected habitat for otters and it is a delight to see them using it. To find a poisoned otter so close to this safe haven is devastating.

It is very important to spread the message about correct use of rat poison to allow otters to thrive along our chalk stream."

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<i>Committee</i>	Richard Clarke, James Dallas, Sean Dempster, Don Harris, Kevin Light, Dr Rodney Owen-Jones, Sir Nigel Thompson
<i>Director</i>	Charlotte Hitchmough, PO Box 2919, Manton, Marlborough, Wiltshire SN8 4WE

Local resident and award winning natural history author Peter Marren expressed his sadness on hearing the news, “One day a beautiful healthy otter in broad daylight: the sight of a lifetime.

Two days later, the same otter stone dead, almost in the same place, with its liver full of rat poison someone left out.

If we want the Kennet to be a safe haven for otters and other wildlife we need to be more careful about what we leave lying around.”

Note to editors:

For more information about safe use of rat poison see: www.diy-pest-control.co.uk
Stonebridge Meadow is jointly owned by Action for the River Kennet and Marlborough Town Council.

For more information: Anna Forbes 07780381709 or anna@riverkennet.org



Photos (left to right). Otter feeding on fish close to Stonebridge Wild River Reserve.
Dead otter discovered two days later.