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## Vermin and biosecurity

Let us look at what we can do to strengthen our biosecurity to protect our farm from vermin. This basically falls into three areas:

- Making our site less attractive to vermin
- Vermin proofing our houses
- Operating an effective baiting programme

## Making the farm/site less attractive

Vermin basically come to the farm to seek food, water, warmth and/or protection or something has driven them out of their habitat. A good example of this last point in many countries is when nearby fields of grain are harvested, causing a massive influx of field mice into the farm to occur.

If food is hard to find on the farm, then it is less likely that vermin will stay. We must therefore avoid feed spillages outside the houses and, if they occur, quickly remove them.

Rats, in particular, are omnivorous so we must not leave dead pigs or afterbirth lying around – anything like this should be stored in vermin-proof containers until it can be removed from the farm.

Vermin need water, especially in hot and dry countries, so make sure you have no spillages, leaking pipes or dripping taps.

There should be no cover for the vermin around the houses, such as long grass, shrubs or accumulated items.

On older farms it is well worth checking to see that there are no disused underground drains as these can make a great 'subway' for rats into the pig house.

Rats and mice do not like open ground as they will be susceptible to attack from above by raptors and owls. Use this to your advantage and concrete your house surrounds. If you have grass, keep it short.

## Vermin proof your buildings

If you closely inspect your buildings, you will discover numerous ingress points at which vermin can enter the building. These include gaps under doors, unsealed drainage holes, 3" pipes going through 4" holes, and damaged wall panels etc. The condition of your farm buildings is something that you should regularly audit.