

Mr. Brown goes to war in the barn

By Ted Brown
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There was something of an invasion at the barn the past months.

First, they slipped in and stole a little grain. Okay, not a big deal— we can all share from time to time, right?

Soon after the lambs were born, I caught them sneaking some lamb grower. I was annoyed, like, that's stealing food from babies. I cursed a bit (under my breath of course—the barn was full of babies ya know.)

Then the action became more aggressive. They brought in their engineers. Within weeks, there were holes in the concrete floor in the barn, all with a pile of gravel outside each hole.

With that amount of dirt dug

up, I was beginning to wonder how big a cavern there is under the floor.

Every barn has rats, but this was becoming an epidemic.

I considered hiring mercenaries, you know, one of the feline types. Poor Hamish the dog was trying his best, but just wasn't fast enough.

Then last week, they escalated the action, chewing the power cord on my battery charger.

Last week, I entered the feed store.

"I'm declaring war on the &%^^\$% rats in the barn. What do you have that is downright ruthless on those little *&!\$?!?"

I know, my eye was twitching, my nostrils were most certainly flaring, and I sensed my blood pressure was at an all-time high.

At first, the store clerk



A Ted Bit

showed me the typical rat poison, which takes days to kick in. The rats die from hemorrhaging inside.

I bought a bait station (okay, sounds high tech, but it just means it's a plastic box that holds the bait, at \$16.95.)

As she started to ring it in, I commented on how it takes a long time to kill rats—the box suggested a couple weeks.

"Geez, that sounds like a long time," I said. "I wish there was a poison that was more effective."

"Oh, you're on a farm, aren't you?" asked the clerk. "I have just the stuff for you."

She went to the 'locked cabinet', and pulled out a box.

I tried to contain my excitement.

"This is the really high powered stuff," she said, "It'll take 'em out with only ONE feeding."

I felt like I was negotiating with an illicit arms dealer making a buy in a back alley.

"One feeding, you say?"

"Yup, it's the 'good' stuff," she almost whispered. "We can only sell it to farmers and exterminators,"

I felt so powerful as I walked out to the truck.

Meanwhile, back at the ranch, er., I mean barn, I scouted the best places to set up the bait.

Having a deadly weapon in one's possession can be intimidating. I had to be careful that the poison wasn't set out where the domesticated animals could come in contact

with it.

I set it out, and then began the second stage of the planned attack— cleaning out the sheep pens.

Rats love a means of getting from one side of the barn to the other undetected, and the burrowing is pretty easy in the manure.

I worked at the pens, and got them cleaned out— and returned the sheep to their pens, all freshly bedded with straw. I even took the skid steer loader to the back passageway and drew out six bucket loads of gravel.

Everything put away, I took a final walk back to the passageway.

A new pile of gravel pushed out from the burrowing hole greeted me.

I have a gut feeling this could be a very long war...

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