

2020

November

Rat Damage Incidences in Lower Perak and Mitigation Measures

CHUNG GAIT FEE¹ AND POH SYEE WHA²

¹Subang Jaya, ²Lower Perak

Two incidences of severe rat damage were encountered in a visit to an oil palm estate in Lower Perak recently. Severe rat damage on oil palm fruit bunches and inflorescences was seen in a young mature 6-year-old planting. Rat species identified were *Rattus tiomanicus* (via cage trapping) and *Rattus argentiventer* (via digging the burrow). Furthermore, images of rat chewing inflorescence were taken by an estate personnel during night inspection. Mitigation measures to identify the cause of rat infestation in young mature planting and to reduce risk of damage and crop losses covering various aspects in several headings, namely rat species, rat damage and crop losses, bait shyness, poison baiting, multiple baits application, mass trapping, dog-assisted hunting, worker hunting, and augmentation of barn owl population are discussed. Severe rat damage on immature palms (1 - 2 years old) was seen in a planting of an adjacent estate. It is not possible to comment on the rat infestation in immature planting which was viewed from far. Fast control is required to end the rat infestation before further loss of palms. However mitigation measures are discussed under several headings, namely rat species, rat damage and crop losses, poison baiting, bait shyness, mass trapping, deterrent mixture and rate baiting policy. In conclusion, rats are important pest in mature and immature oil palm plantings and rat management is becoming more challenging due to acute labour shortage and the need for multi-pronged approach in integrated rat management and /or the need to tolerate certain levels of rat damage. To meet these approaching challenges, the training of estate personnel must be emphasised and supported by new findings from on-going R&D works.

Keywords: Rats, oil palm, damage, mitigation.

