

Gerbils are gearing up for the grain season

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With the grain planting season on hand, farmers have to be aware of the imminent threat posed by gerbils to newly planted crops. Gerbils are a menace to grain farmers and may cause serious crop damage by digging up planted seed or eating germinating seed.

[Lees dit in Afrikaans.](#)

It is still early days and if a properly structured integrated gerbil management programme is implemented, the potential damage can be nullified. Natural enemies such as owls and diurnal raptors play a significant role in gerbil management but are often struck from duty by the irresponsible use of pesticides and rodenticides. CropLife South Africa urges grain farmers to download and follow the [gerbil management programme here](#) and to refrain from using any pesticides off-label to control gerbils.

Any of the registered rodenticides as listed in the gerbil management plan must be placed in bait stations or in gerbil burrows, as explained in the plan. Scattering rodenticides onto the soil surface is not only illegal but ineffective and poses a severe risk for biodiversity. We also encourage grain farmers to attract owls and diurnal raptors to assist with gerbil control. This is all explained in detail in the management plan. Scouting is a very important part of the management plan and farmers are encouraged to check hedgerows for burrows and gerbil droppings. Once found, it should trigger the implementation of the management plan.

For advice call Dr. Gerhard Verdoorn at CropLife SA on 082 446 8946 or email him at gerhard@croplife.co.za. – *Grain SA newsletter*