

Cats on nighttime mice patrol at Calgary store

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A Canadian Tire in Calgary has reached a compromise with provincial officials after the store's use of cats to control its pest problem ran afoul of Alberta Health Services.

The Beacon Hill store at Sarcee Trail and 112th Avenue N.W. — at the city's outer edge next to an open field and close to a landfill site — has been attracting mice.

After trying several methods to get rid of the rodents, store owner Chris Pustowka brought in three farm cats. The mice quickly disappeared, he said.

"As we get more and more concerned about everything environmental, natural predators do the trick," he said.



Canadian Tire store owner Chris Pustowka's cat Lilly waits for the night shift to begin. CBC

But a customer who objected to the idea of cats wandering around the store reported it to officials at AHS. They told Pustowka he wasn't allowed to have the cats in the store.

"Cats are not a recognized form of pest control as far as we're concerned," said AHS spokeswoman Sarah Nunn.

"We'd usually advise that they seek the advice of a professional pest control operator."

But within three weeks, 3,000 customers signed a petition demanding the cats be allowed to come back.

"I thought it was cool. Totally cool. I mean there's no food being served here or anything, right?" customer Mike Peace said Monday. "No harm's being done to anyone."

So Pustowka and the province came to a compromise: the cats can roam the store — but only at night.

The arrangement takes care of the mice problem, but Pustowka said many of his customers still ask what happened to the cats.

"Kids would come in and immediately walk through the doors and say, 'Mom, dad, where are the cats? Let's go find them,'" Pustowka said.

Other storeowners hoping to bring cats in to get mice out might think again.

AHS said the chances of meeting its strict conditions to do so are slim to none.