READING, England, Dec. 11 (UPI) -- A plague of poison-resistant rats is threatening parts of England, to the point a legislating body has asked for permission to utilize stronger poisons.

The population of brown "super rats," which carry life-threatening diseases, in the Berkshire, Hampshire and Oxford areas has been estimated at 80 million, The Daily Telegraph reported Tuesday, noting the West Berkshire Council has contacted the government Health and Safety Executive for consent to change regulations to allow the use of brodifacoum, a poison in use in the United States and elsewhere in Europe that is stronger than the poison traditionally used in Britain.

Incidents of rat bites, including one that killed a bedridden 80 year-old woman, have been reported, the newspaper said.

"Studies show a large part of southern England has rats who have mutated to resist standard poisons. Pest controllers are having problems and more potent poisons need to be used carefully and responsibly," said University of Reading researcher Alan Buckle.

A spokesman for the Health and Safety Executive said West Berkshire exterminators had previously applied for stronger poisons but withdrew their requests when they learned they needed to monitor wildlife for signs of poisoning.

Source Citation (MLA 8th Edition)