

## “Rodent Rage”

By Jay Coates, The Popular Mechanic

Last year, I received a phone call from a regular customer with a 2004 Carrera cabriolet. (Let’s call him Frank.) Frank stated that he had a dead battery on his garage kept Porsche. We talked about methods of recharging that Frank could do on his own, since he lives 45 minutes away on a beautiful historic 80 acre farm.



After he charged his battery and started the Porsche up, there were some warning lights on the dash, so he brought the car in to us for a check over. I connected the Piwis2 and found more fault codes than I had ever seen at once. Upon further inspection, we found a massive nest in the engine bay as well as 20 pounds of dog food kibble under the intake manifold on the engine block. Damage done by a rodent invasion.

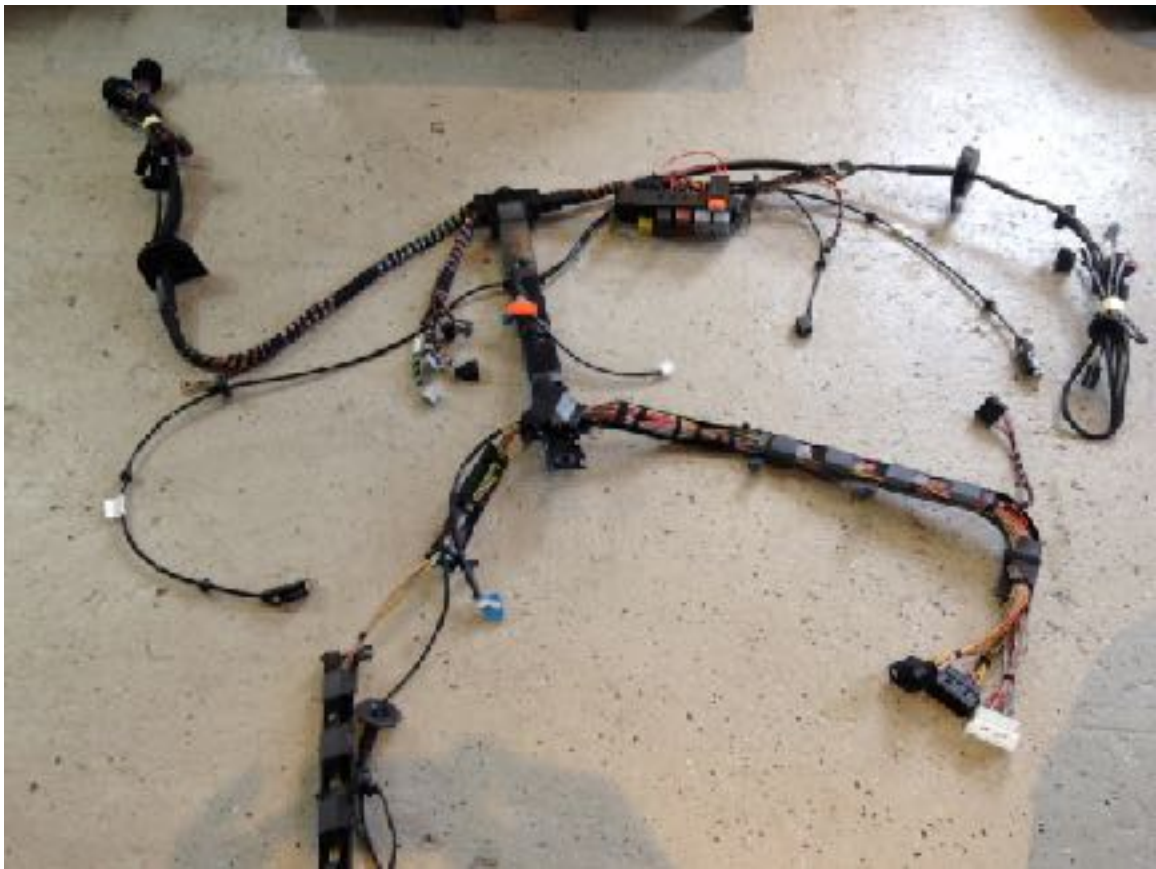


The rodent had quite a penthouse pad behind the right taillight assembly. Ninety percent of the foam insulation that is usually above the engine, was now finely mulched into a big nest with plenty of dog food bits, broken wires (11 different colors), and topped off with extra urine. The clean up became a near hazmat infectious task from hell.



Now Frank has been living on his farm for years, and so why now all of sudden, did this happen to his Porsche? After talking to Frank, he shared that his 16 year old outdoor cat had just passed away a few months ago. In addition to his outdoor cat, he also had two dogs, and he kept the dog food in his garage. The death of his cat, the availability of a food source, and the comfort of a nice, safe, and warm Porsche was a natural attraction to a rodent.

Frank's car needed a rear main wiring harness, an engine harness, and new foam insulation. The rear harness had to be made in Germany and was VIN # specific. It took close to two months to have the wiring harness custom made, and then it was express shipped from Germany. Below is the custom-made rear main wiring harness.



Just for reference, the thick central part goes under the e-brake handle and almost all the interior had to come out.



Frank's Porsche was not the first, nor was it the last. Various 996s and 997s have been under siege of these rodents, especially because the cars are stored over the winter. Rodents tend to go after knock sensor wires, oil level sensor wires, oxygen sensor wires, and the signal wire to the starter. I have posted this issue to my Porsche tech colleagues across the country and the problem is everywhere, although in California it may be worse with some reports of rodents eating the plastic fuel tanks.

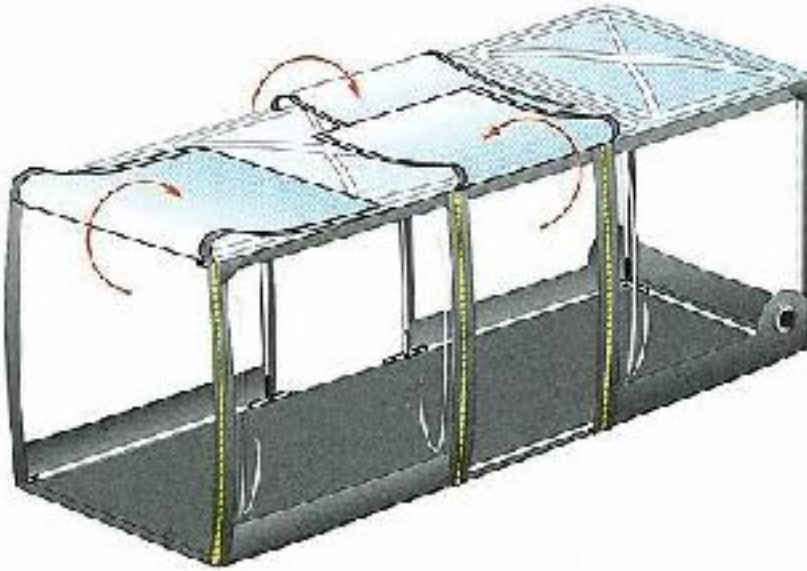
So the main attraction seems to be the wiring. Since the early 2000s, many of the automobile manufactures have moved towards a more environmentally friendly wiring coating made from soybean which is a nice protein enriched snack for rodents during the winter months. Yum! It happens in Toyotas, Mercedes, GMC, etc, but it is especially problematic for Porsche owners who store their cars over the winter making it an ideal place for these rodents to nest and feed. The cost of repairs can run between a few thousands to tens of thousands of dollars, but on a good note are usually covered under homeowners insurance.



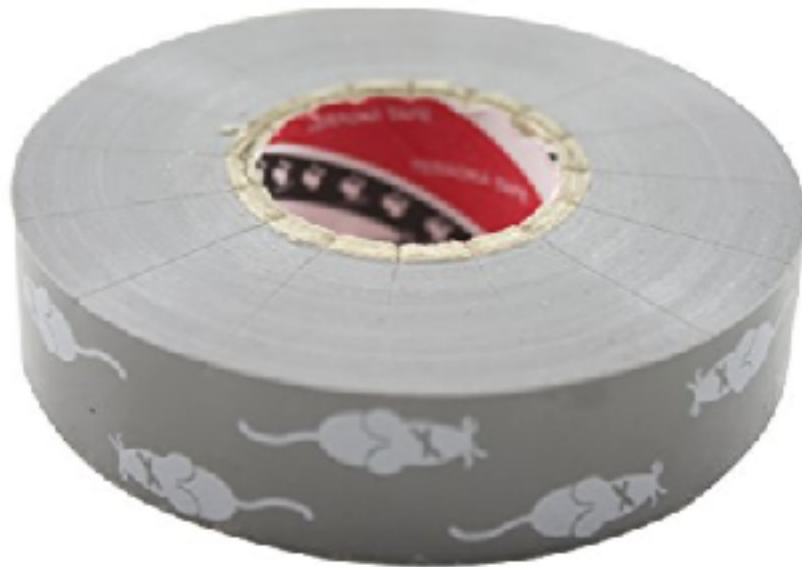


So what can be done? I have asked my colleagues across the country for a range of solutions and here is what they have recommended to protect your investment.

- Place mouse or rat traps around the tires of the car. Supposedly the rodent gains access to the car by climbing up the treads of the tire. One colleague suggests placing one trap in front of the tire, one behind the tire, and one on top of the tire.
- Rodent repellent spray (usually peppermint or pepper scented) can be applied to tires and inside the engine compartment. You want to avoid places which might alter the smell inside your car. One colleague described how a customer placed moth balls inside the car, which did not work, and now cannot get rid of the smell. Dryer sheets might work better.
- Have your engine shampooed before storing your Porsche for the winter. The proper cleaner will deter these rodents and make your engine sparkle.
- Keep the lights on inside your garage. Rodents tend to prefer darkness over lighted areas.
- If you live outside of the more urban areas, get an outdoor cat. Although I am a dog person with two Newfoundlands and don't know much about cats, my colleague in California recommends the "Maine Coon" cat, which is well known for its hunting skills.
- There are "car capsules" that encapsulate your car and protect it over the winter storage season. There are various companies who make these in various designs. One Porsche owner turned me on to this and he really swears by it.



- Rodent Tape—Honda has developed a pepper scented rodent tape with a special design of little mice with Xs on their heads. The problem with this, is that it is difficult to get into the areas with tape.



One final note, it is recommended not to use mouse or rat killer as the rodent may find its final resting place inside your car. And as one colleague from NC describes, “I tell my customers not to use poison, because I’m not hunting for it when it crawls up in the dash to die.”

Although I have attempted to keep this article light hearted, it is a serious matter. Often times, we don't think about it until it happens. So my recommendation is be proactive, keep an eye out for any evidence of rodents-- look in air filters, cabin filters, and look for misplaced nutshells or droppings, etc. And as for Frank, he now has two cats, one is a spare, just in case. Special thanks to Frank for his story and my Porsche tech colleagues for their input.