

Beware of ultrasonic pest control devices — Consumers' Association of Penang

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OCTOBER 31 — Ultrasonic pest-control devices have been promoted extensively in the market as a solution to get rid of all kinds of pests from fleas to rats. They can be easily bought online or at hardware stores and some supermarkets. These devices are promoted with convincing explanation that they use ultrasonic sound waves that humans cannot hear to drive pests away.

Before falling into the advertisement trap, the Consumers' Association of Penang would like to warn that they often do not work as expected.

In 2001, the Federal Trade Commission (FTC) of the United States of America sent letters to more than 60 manufacturers and retailers of such devices, stating that the efficacy claims about these products should be supported by scientific evidence.

There are many of these devices in the market with the claim that they will eliminate rodents, repel insects, and fleas from pets.

According to the FTC, the reaction of rodents to ultrasound 'would be temporary at best' because rodents may become accustomed to the ultrasound and return to their nesting or feeding area.

A study by the University of Arizona stated that there is "often lacking measurable results to support these claims". The study also shows that such devices may also affect non-target animals such as dogs that can hear ultrasonic sounds.

The extensive study showed that the device had selective effect in repelling certain kinds of insects (crickets) while having little or no effect on others (e.g. cockroaches). There were also other concerns such as weakening the clarity of telephone conversations and interfering with burglar alarm systems.

We urge consumers to be cautious to avoid falling into the advertisement trap that promises to get rid of all kinds of pests from their homes. At the same time the Ministry of Domestic Trade and Consumer Affairs (KPDNHEP), SIRIM and the Malaysian Energy Commission should also look into the matter as such devices have been in the market for decades and there are numerous reports and studies stating the effectiveness of these devices as pest repellents are unsubstantiated.

Mohideen Abdul Kader
President
Consumers Association of Penang (CAP)

*** This is the personal opinion of the writer or publication and does not necessarily represent the views of Malay Mail.**