

Steroid Squirrels

Actually, it's worse than you think. They're steroid *explosive* squirrels. The concept is as simple as it is depraved: how do you get a bioweapon package widely dispersed? Why, you blow up the container in which it is currently housed. But you don't blow it up *too* much; simply converting a squirrel's body fat and blood into a mildly explosive gas would do the trick nicely, for given values of 'nicely.' It took researchers two years to come up with the right genetic tweaks, but once they had them, the future was theirs.

One problem with rodents, however: they're very good at getting loose. In this case, an entire truck of them got loose during a firefight between the people breeding the explosive squirrels and the people who objected to the basic concept of an exploding squirrel. In the resulting chaos, a breeding population got away, and is now busily expanding its territory -- which is defined as 'the closest convenient area where avocados are being grown.'

And why should you care about avocados? Because of the failsafe designed into Steroid Squirrels. The squirrels would appear completely normal as long as they were not

given extra Vitamin K, which would kick into gear the mechanism that caused heavy fat gain and retention. Once that happened, the squirrel would bulk up until its Vitamin K levels dropped back to normal -- which would then cause the squirrel's blood to start gassing up, with inevitably explosive results.

This appeared almost foolproof at the time; but we will never know whether or not the original researchers would have found it as foolproof if the squirrels ever got access to avocados, which happen to be rich in Vitamin K. Nobody thought to ask said researchers about **that** particular scenario, and of course it's too late now. All we know is that 'fat squirrel' and 'avocado season' is throwing up the right search engine results, so it's up to the agents to get down there and figure out how to resolve the situation without getting multiple face-loads of aerosolized squirrel. Or worse, without getting squirrel all over the civilian population. They're happy to tacitly ignore many things, but exploding rodents is probably not on *that* list.

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