



A rigorous survey of local authorities throughout the UK.

With a 100% response rate, coupled with a wide range of pest species covered, this research is the only comprehensive analysis of UK pests.





ABOUT BPCA

The British Pest Control Association (BPCA) is a not for profit organisation representing the interests and development of its members; those companies involved in public health pest control. Formed in 1942, BPCA is the lead body for the pest management industry within the UK. Our 500+ company members protect public health, property and the environment.

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RESEARCH

This is the only comprehensive analysis of the main UK pests. It has been gathered under Freedom of Information Act 2000 requests from every corner of the UK, and analysed by BPCA to give detailed information on pests and how we deal with them.

The research shows data for 2012-13 and 2013-14 and compares with previous years' data sets, gathered in exactly the same way. The survey provides statistics on how each nation, borough, region or district compares across a range of key performance indicators.

The full report contains detailed information on all 407 local authorities, district councils, and unitary bodies from all four home nations.

The information is broken down by area, pest species and head of population, and the full report allows further analysis. The research also analyses the resources available to all authorities including the pest control services they offer and the staffing levels therein.

The authors would like to thank the local authorities who gave their data and support to this project.

How the research was collated

The information for the survey was gathered by submitting requests under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 to all local authorities in the UK, giving us a 100% response rate. The data sets act as a benchmark for future research, allowing us to annually establish a national pest picture and begin to analyse how the landscape of public health pest control is changing. Budgets have been cut almost across the board, and local authorities are in the main dealing with the problems of public health pests as they did before.

Clearly there will be specific issues that have caused one local authority to come out above or below another, and reasons for changes in the data between the years. It may be that the survey period included a pest 'plague' for that area, or that the local authority is extremely efficient at treating pests, and so picks up the lion's share of work in an area. Similarly, where the local independent pest control professionals are well organised, they may be handling a larger proportion of pest treatments than elsewhere. And finally, in the current economic climate there are significant changes afoot in the size and scope of local authority pest control. Some councils have taken on commercial contracts, for example for large RSLs and housing ALMOs, where others have seen changes in housing stock or boundary changes that have affected their results. What is apparent is that local authority pest controllers are continuing to deliver excellent pest control to their residents despite the difficulties they face.

Trends and specific pests

We can provide trend data for geographic areas, plus comparisons of specific pest types including:

- Rats
- Wasps
- Bed bugs
- Ants
- Mice
- Birds
- Cockroaches
- Other insects and mammals

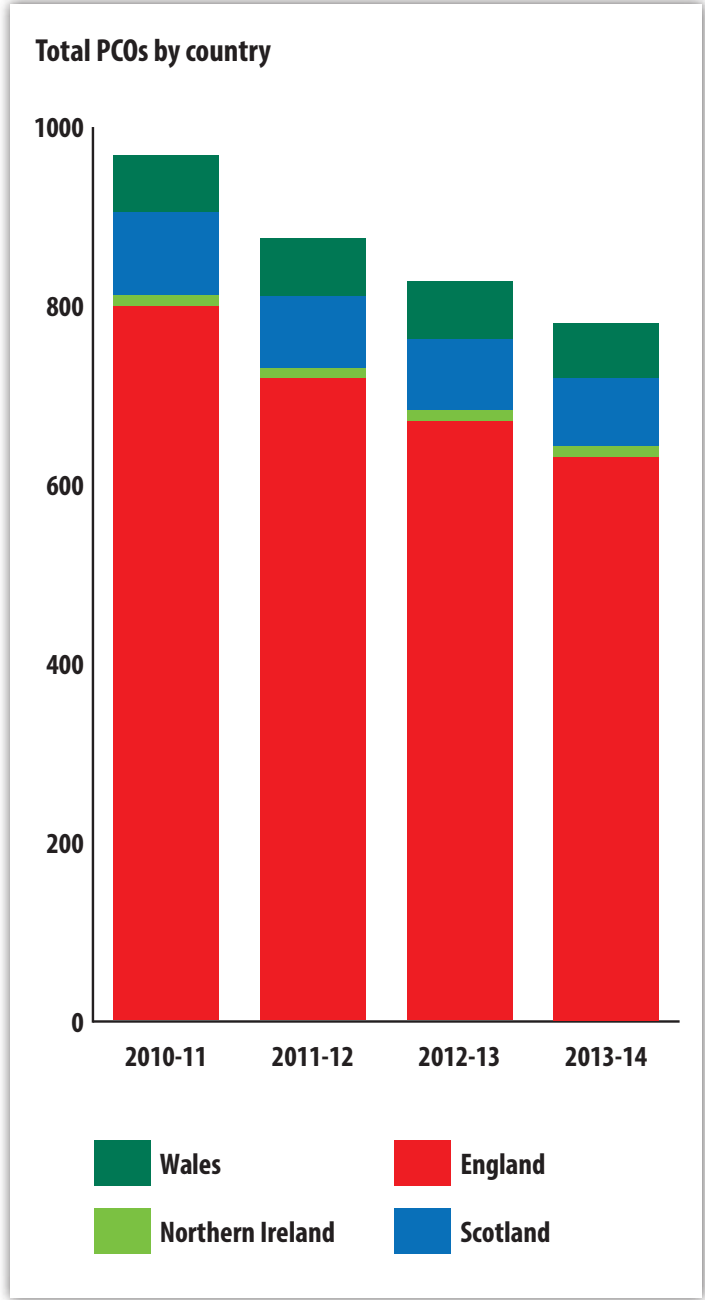
Survey overview

Our national survey results demonstrate that Government austerity measures and local authority cuts continue to have adverse effects on public health pest control services. We found that many services are under threat from future cutbacks, and in most cases these cuts have already been felt in terms of pest control staffing and services – all of which may have a knock-on effect on response times, pest infestations and control. Until recently the overwhelming majority of local authorities provided pest control services in-house as part of their core public health responsibilities. Our survey shows that just over 80% are still providing some form of pest control service either in-house or, more commonly, contracted out. However, nearly 20% of local authorities have decided to discontinue their services due to the current austerity measures and changes to local authority financial models. This is a 3.6% increase on our first National Survey in 2011. The full effects of Government changes are still yet to be determined. More and more local authorities are cutting or discontinuing their pest control activities, and those continuing to deliver a facility are increasingly charging the public for services whilst cutting core expenditure such as staffing in order to meet budget requirements. Last year we predicted continuing reductions in staffing levels for those authorities who maintain some form of pest control service. Indeed, this year saw an additional 5% cut in staffing nationwide, with an overall 20% loss of pest control staff since 2011. At present 19% of local authorities contract out their pest control services to a third party, 38% (153) of local authorities do not have an in-house service, and with another 19% planning to review the future of their service, we could soon see more than half of councils without the traditional in-house service.

Across the UK, total pest treatments by local authorities have declined by 26% in the last four years.

This year total numbers of local authority pest control officers increased in England and Wales for the first time since the survey began.

The general public is lagging behind the reality – the majority of people still think their first port of call for pest-related problems is their council (CIEH research, 2013, Public Perception: Statistics that prove the essential value of public health pest control). However, many will find their calls rejected by councils that no longer provide such services. Ten years ago almost all local authorities offered free or subsidised pest control to their residents but now only 6% of councils with an in-house service are able to continue to offer free treatments. For those who subcontract the work to a third party, around 20% offer free or subsidised pest control. The total number of callouts for pest issues in 2013-14 increased from the previous year by 1.4% to 501,595 confirming that, regardless of availability or cost, the public continues to expect assistance with pest issues from local authorities.



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Survey overview (continued)

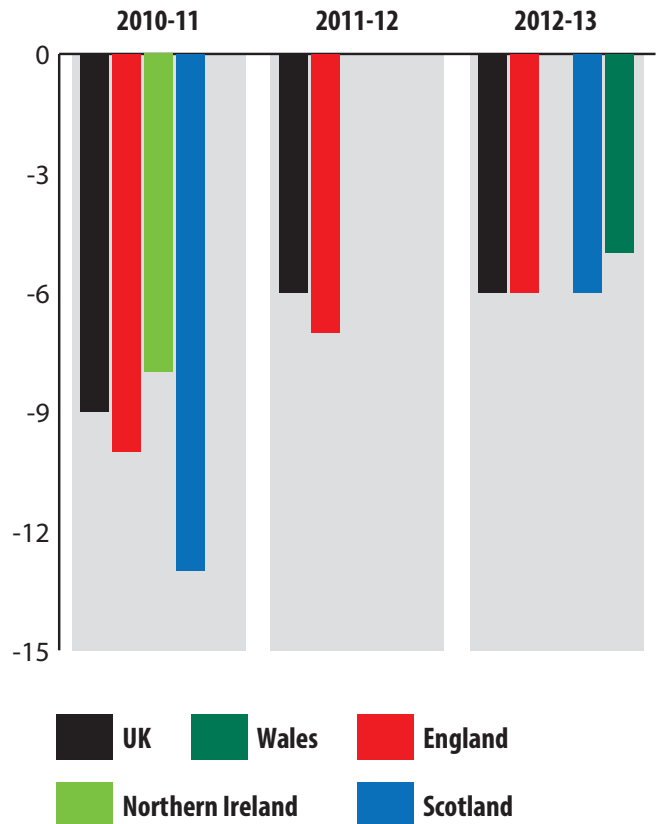
The research has highlighted that, despite the fact that most pest control treatments were administered in England, overall there were more treatments undertaken in Wales per person than in any other country, equating to 13.39 treatments per thousand residents, compared to 7.7 treatments in England. Also, for the third year running, pest controllers working for local authorities in Wales administer more treatments a year (862 per pest controller) than any other country and 112 more than last year. Again results show Greater London has more pest control operators and administered more treatments than Scotland, Wales or Northern Ireland. However, the results have highlighted that, despite this difference in resource, there were over twice as many treatments per resident administered in Wales and Northern Ireland than there were in Greater London.

The total number of pest controllers employed by local authorities in the North West of England has increased by 30% this year.

Nationally, the number of treatments administered by council pest controllers has fallen by 8.2% despite this year's small increase in treatments and reduction in staffing numbers. This clearly demonstrates how the large decrease in staffing (nearly 200 PCOs since 2011) has left local authorities struggling to keep up with public demand. The data reveals further regional disparity as an additional 10,000 annual treatments in England accounts entirely for this year's overall increase whilst Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales remain on a downwards trend on all fronts.

The number of local authorities offering a pest control service (in-house or subcontracted) has declined by 4% nationwide but in Wales has increased by 19% since 2010.

Annual percentage change in staffing



Since the survey began total PCO numbers in Northern Ireland were reduced by 85%.

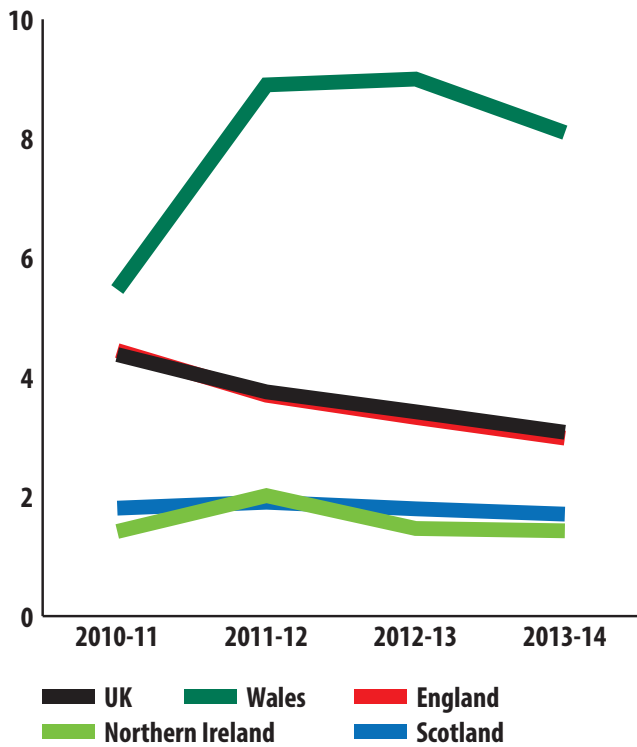
Similarly, while councils in Wales were able to maintain their level of staffing this year after making deeper cuts in previous years, England and Scotland have lost 6% and 10% of their council pest control officers respectively. Further analysis has shown that the East, South East and North West local authorities have collectively seen an unexpected increase in the number of treatments administered by their pest controllers. This was in spite of their reduction in pest control operators which comprise nearly a quarter of England's total 6% reduction on the previous year's levels.

Rats

Rat treatments equated to 39% of all pest services in the UK. Overall there were 196,012 rat treatments undertaken in the UK over 2013-14. Although these figures may seem high this was actually a 30% decrease on the 2010-11 figures, clearly showing cuts in local authority resources are having an impact on the amount of pests councils are able to treat. Rats are more common in built-up and urban areas so it was no great surprise that there were 11,497 rat treatments undertaken by the authorities in the whole of Greater London. However, this represents a remarkable decrease of 42% since 2011. On the other hand, Birmingham City Council dealt with a staggering 14,812 rat treatments last year, a 5% increase on 2013.

The last four years has seen rat treatments declining by 30% while bed bug treatments have increased by 21%.

Rats per thousand people



Fastfacts

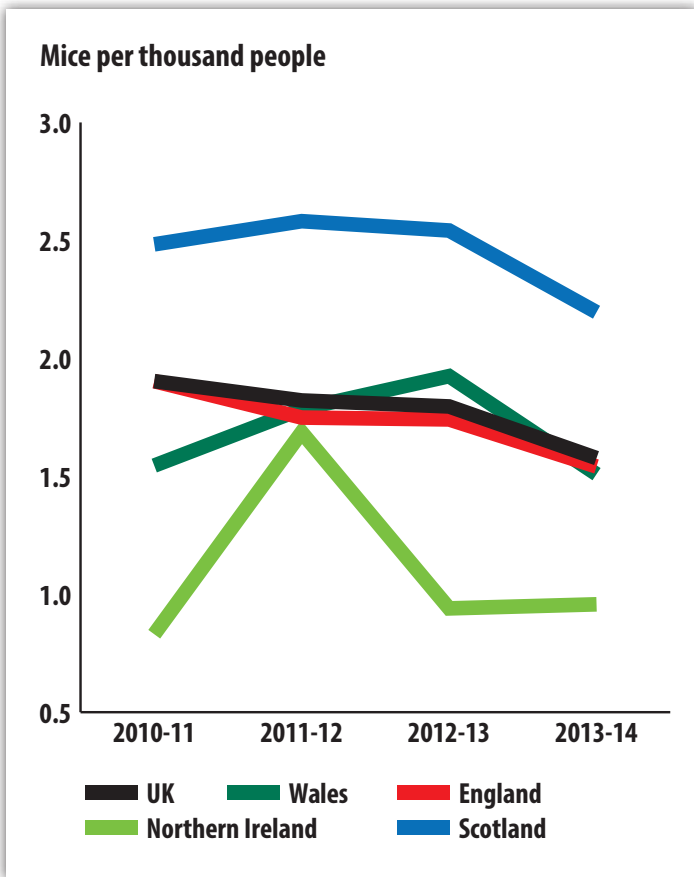


- Rats have long incisor teeth which grow continually throughout their life, meaning they must gnaw materials to wear the teeth down, potentially causing huge problems when they gnaw through wiring or water pipes
- The Norway or common brown rat is the most abundant rat in the UK and it is often found in burrows and sewer systems
- Norway rats can jump vertically to a height of 77cm, and more than 120cm horizontally
- Norway rats will avoid any new or strange object for 10 to 14 days, termed a 'new object reaction' (neophobia)
- Up to 50% of Norway rats carry Leptospirosis (Weils disease), which is transmitted through the rats urine and can result in flu like symptoms, jaundice, kidney failure and even death (one recent high-profile fatality was Olympic gold-winning rower Andy Holmes)



Mice

The total number of professional mouse control treatments administered by all UK local authorities in 2013-14 was 100,365 which was a 17% drop in treatments on 2012-13. The overwhelming majority of local authorities always used to provide rodent (rats and mice) control free as part of their public health responsibilities. However, over the past couple of years we have seen more and more local authorities either cutting their service provision or changing their treatment policies and criteria altogether, therefore dealing with less call-outs. Greater London local authorities make up the top three councils for mice treatments per thousand residents, with a combined total of 65 mice treatments per thousand residents. The Corporation of the City of London saw a massive 25% increase in mice treatments this year. However, despite these individual explosions, numbers of mice related treatments by Greater London councils declined in 2014 along with the rest of the UK.



Fastfacts



- House mice are inquisitive and will openly investigate new objects
- House mice are incontinent and produce approximately 80 droppings in a day, contaminating wherever they are active
- House mice are light, intermittent and erratic feeders, eating small amounts of food from large number of areas, which can lead to the contamination of many foods by a single mouse
- Mice like to climb, so will often enter a building and live in the upper floors – even at the top of tower blocks
- Mice can take all the water they require to survive from the foods that they eat



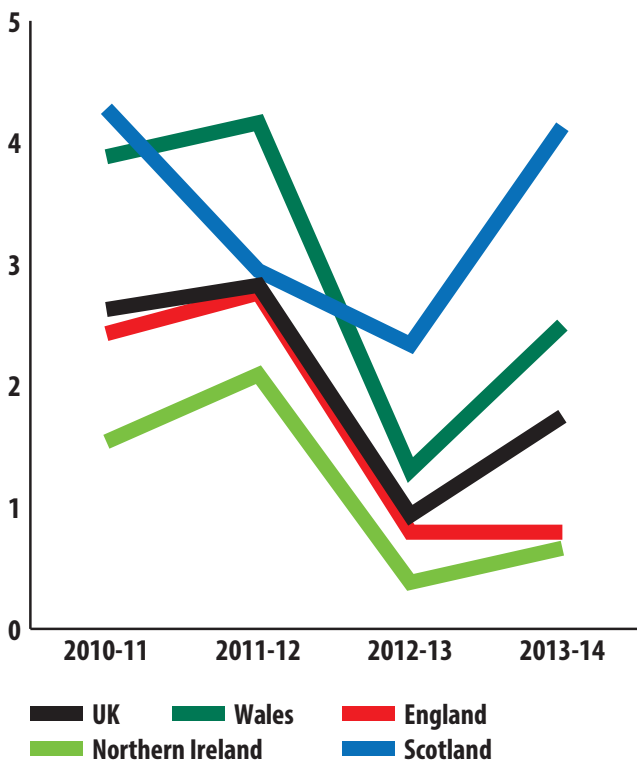
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Wasps

The total number of wasp control treatments administered by all UK local authorities in 2013-14 was 111,147, which was an 87% increase on the previous year. After another terrible summer much like the one we, and our wasps endured in 2012, wasp numbers skyrocketed across the UK again in 2013-14. Scottish local authorities undertook the fewest wasp treatments per head of population in the whole of the UK. After being the worst country to live in for number of wasp treatments administered by local authorities in 2012, Northern Ireland now tops the table of wasp treatments administered per thousand people with 3.81. This is even more impressive considering the 115% increase in wasp callouts in Northern Ireland on the previous year. All regions of England suffered this summer with most areas seeing at least a 50% increase in wasp numbers. However, it was North Lanarkshire Council in Scotland who topped the table this year, administering a total of 4,669 wasp treatments, 14 for every thousand residents.

The North East saw the biggest percentage rise in wasp treatments, which was 62.73%, giving them a total of 10,335 treatments. This pales into insignificance compared to the South East which topped the wasp charts, with the local authorities administering a staggering 24,123 treatments during 2011-12.

Wasps per thousand people



Fastfacts



- By late summer a normal wasp nest can contain between 3,000 and 5,000 wasps
- Wasps become more active when exposed to light, so if you have a nest in your attic, don't go up there with a torch!
- Wasp colonies survive for one season in the UK, with nests dying off in autumn/winter
- Old wasp nests are never re-used by wasps, but in favourable nesting sites new nests can be built next to old ones
- Fertilised queens are the only members of the nest to survive, and they overwinter to start new colonies in spring

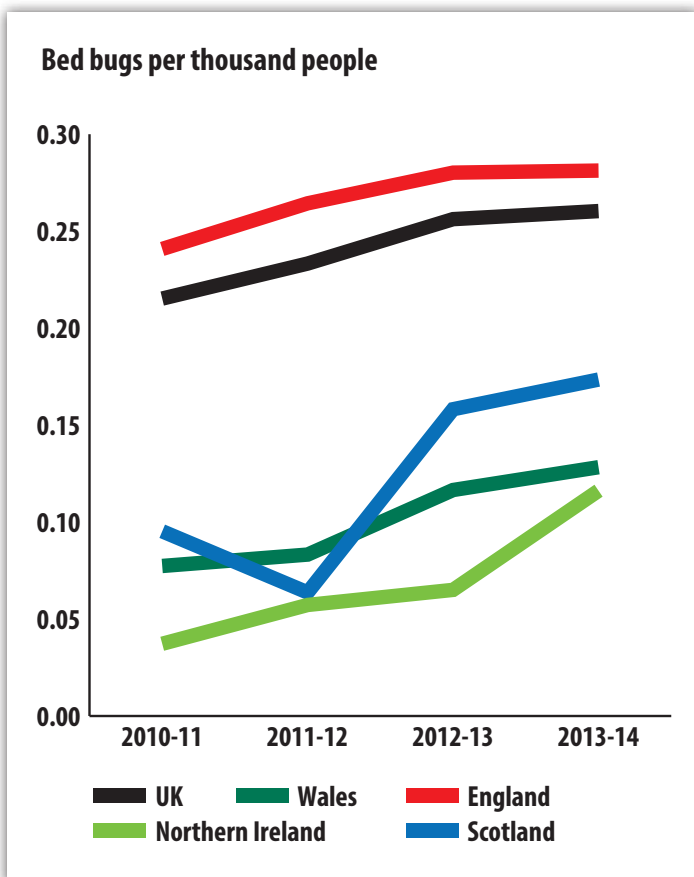


2012-13 was a quiet year for wasps as total treatments across the UK declined by 66% on 2011-12 and increased this year.

Bed bugs

In recent years there has been a resurgence of bed bugs within the UK. This is due to several factors but mainly through increased international travel and the lack of public awareness about bed bug prevention methods. The total number of bed bug control treatments administered by all UK local authorities in 2013-14 was 16,569 which although only 1.6% increase on 2012-13, this equates to 3.3% of the total pest control treatments administered by all local authorities across the UK and a 21% increase in numbers since 2011. With 80% of bed bug treatments being administered by English local authorities, it is encouraging to see that our hardworking local authorities in London reduced the total bed bug treatments administered there by 16% this year. Nonetheless, London remains a hotspot as councils there make up the top five for bed bug treatments per thousand residents. This is due to a number of factors such as high levels of tourism and housing density in the capital. A concerning trend the survey highlighted was that the South East and West experienced the largest increase in bed bug treatments across the UK, with the local authorities collectively increasing treatments on the previous year's results by 16 and 19% respectively.

More than two thirds of the annual total bed bug treatments in England are made up by the North West and Greater London authorities.



Fastfacts



- Bed bugs are a nocturnal parasite that feed on the blood of mammals, especially humans
- Female bed bugs will lay approximately 200 eggs in just five days in cracks and crevices around bedrooms and properties
- Bed bugs do not fly or jump – they are spread through luggage, second hand furniture, laundry or by simply crawling from one infested property to a neighbouring one
- Bed bugs are not known to be frequent carriers of disease, but the irritation caused by bites can be severe
- Any property can suffer from bed bug activity – it is often bad luck and not a sign that a property is dirty or in a poor state of repair

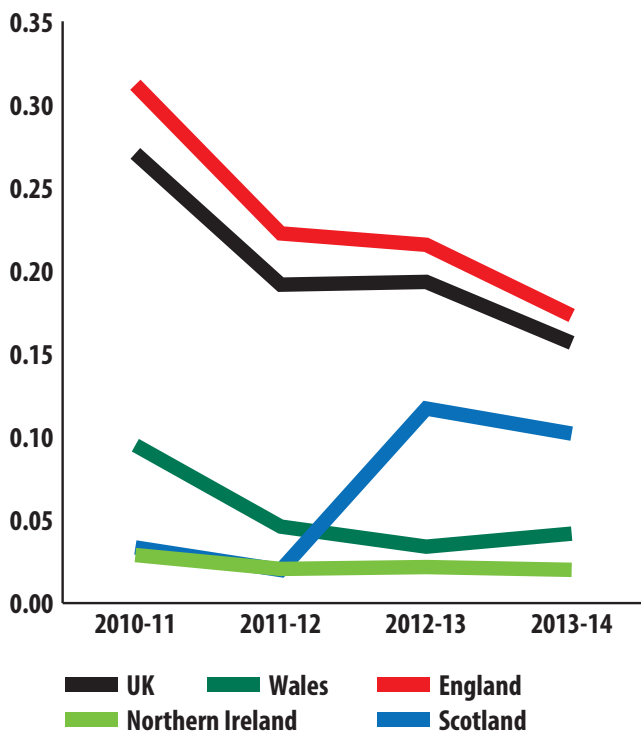
Cockroaches

Even though cockroaches aren't as common in this country as they used to be, there were still 9,962 treatments administered by local authorities across the UK. Although this figure sounds relatively high, this was actually a 42.1% decrease on the 2010-11 responses. For the second year running yet again England delivered the majority (8,600 or 86.3%) of the cockroach treatments administered. This year's survey has shown that cockroach treatments decreased across almost all areas of the UK last year. In Wales the number has dropped by two thirds since the survey began. This could be a drop in actual cockroach numbers currently infesting the UK, however we feel this drop is unlikely, and is probably due to resource demands and government cuts to public health services which has led to residents and local business owners having to seek help from a private pest control company.

Fastfacts



Cockroaches per thousand people



- Oriental cockroaches are a pest of warm environments such as heating ducts, refuse tips and drains
- Cockroach egg cases are called ootheca
- Oriental cockroach ootheca contain approximately 16 eggs and can lay dormant for three months or longer before hatching
- Cockroaches tend to hide by day, becoming very active at night
- German cockroaches are smaller than oriental cockroaches and prefer warmer conditions
- German cockroaches are fantastic climbers and will often infest the higher levels of flats and premises

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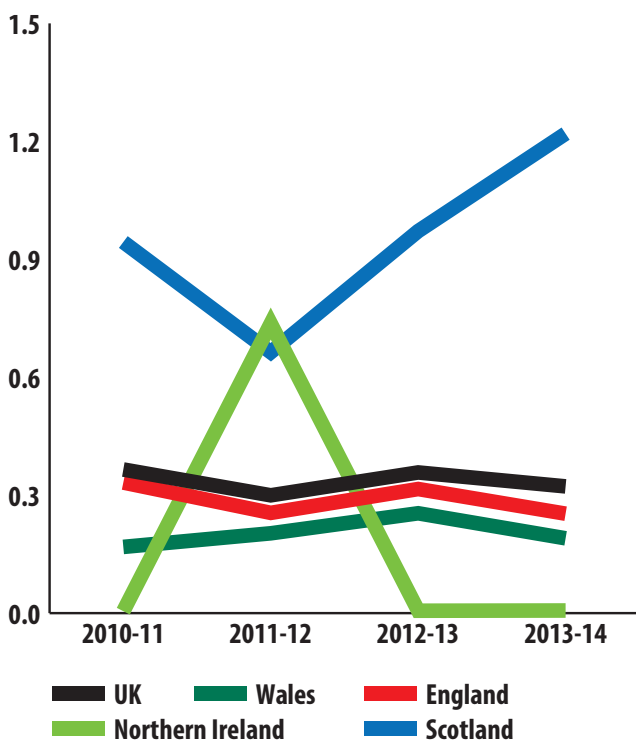
Ants

An old foe of the pest control industry, ants still manage to cause problems across the UK. Ant treatments in the UK equated to 4% of all pest control services provided by local authorities. There were 20,515 ant related treatments in 2013-14, which was a 10% drop on ant treatments on the previous year.

Although there were 20,515 treatments administered by all local authorities in the UK during 2013-14, only 8% were dealt with in Northern Ireland.

Scotland has seen an explosion in the number of ant treatments, increasing by over 300% in the four years the survey has run.

Ants per thousand people



Note that this section of the survey includes garden ants, Pharaoh ants, ghost ants and many others pest ant species found in the UK.

Fastfacts



- Although the common black ant is regularly discovered indoors in summer, most nests are located out of doors under paving stones and in gardens – the ants are simply foraging for food
- In late summer winged sexually mature males and females will ‘swarm’ in large numbers to mate, after which the males usually die, and a small proportion of mated females survive to start new colonies
- Garden ants feed on a wide variety of foods, including sweet substances, seeds, insects and aphid secretions known as ‘honey dew’, which the ants farm
- Although garden ants are not associated with the spread of disease, some tropical species that only survive in heated buildings such as the Pharaoh’s ant, can carry disease organisms and will contaminate sterile materials
- Garden ant colonies can ‘trail’ for considerable distances to a food source, often complicating control measures as the nest can be difficult to locate

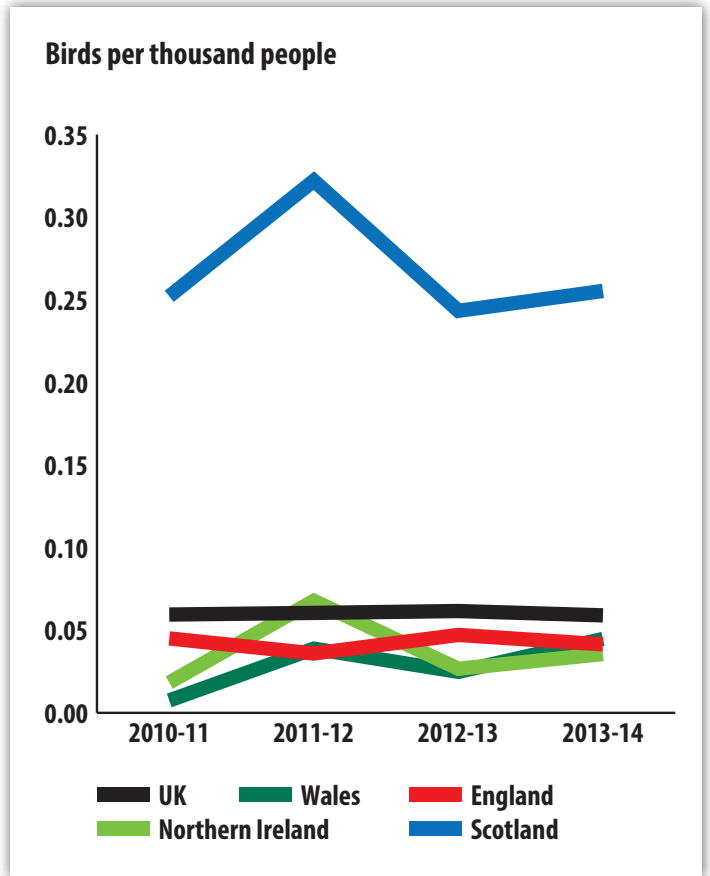


Birds

Bird control is more of a specialist area of pest control in the UK that can be extremely costly to administer. Therefore, there are very few local authorities in the UK that are willing to deal with them, as part of their core pest control service offering. The survey results show that in 2013-14 there were 3,755 bird control treatments undertaken by UK local authorities. Even though this seems a relatively low number, bird treatments by authorities in Northern Ireland have increased over sixfold since 2011.

Fastfacts

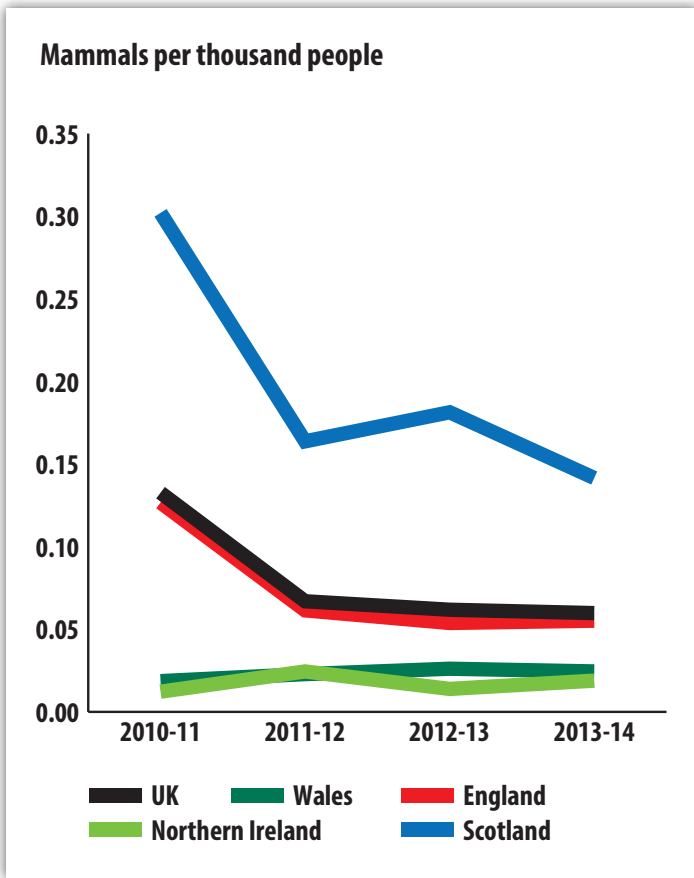
- All bird species in the UK are protected under The Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981
- Special licences are issued by the Government to deal with specific bird pests
- Feral pigeons are transmitters of diseases such as ornithosis and salmonellosis
- Bird and pigeon debris can be very destructive, as droppings can erode surfaces such as stonework, and nests can block gutters and gullies, encouraging flooding
- Bird nesting sites are reservoirs of infestation for a number of insect pests such as clothes moth, spider beetles, flies and mites
- Bird droppings around your property can be a potential health and safety risk as they can be very slippery in wet conditions



The survey results show that in 2013-14 there were 3,755 bird control treatments undertaken by UK local authorities.

Other mammals

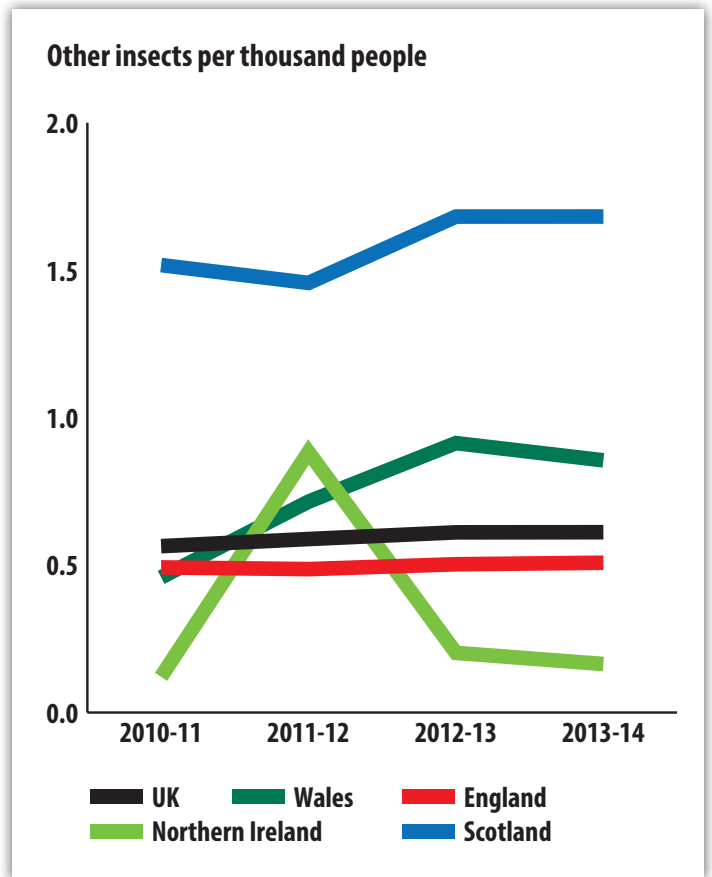
There are a variety of other mammal pests we could have included in our research such as foxes, rabbits, squirrels and moles. However, due to relative low occurrences, the difference in issues due to geographical surroundings, and the services in which councils offer these pests were all put together into this one category. Our 2013-14 figures show a 54% drop in treatments administered on our 2010-11 figures. There are a number of reasons for this such as resource cuts, a change in public attitudes towards these pests, or a skills shortage in these specialist areas in local authority pest control teams.



Other insects

There are a number of other insect pest species that could have featured in the survey such as lice, fleas, flies, beetles and moths to name a few. However, due to the varied styles of local authority reporting it would be very difficult to obtain any useful comparable data, so these pests were grouped into one section, 'other insects'.

The number of services for 'other insects' in Scotland has more than doubled in the last year.



Our 2013-14 figures show a 54% drop in treatments administered on our 2010-11 figures.

TEN TOP TIPS FOR THE GENERAL PUBLIC

- 1** Do not presume that you will never have a problem. Pests such as mice and cockroaches are life's great opportunists, and even the cleanest of properties can suffer from a pest infestation.
- 2** If you think you have a problem, act quickly! Pests such as mice are only pregnant for a very short period of time so if you don't treat them immediately you could be quickly overrun.
- 3** If you feed wild birds or keep pets in the garden, rodents could be attracted to your property. Try to use enough food for birds to consume in a day without leaving food standing overnight.
- 4** Compost heaps are good sources of food and warmth for pests. Try to locate them as far away from your house as possible and monitor them for signs of pest activity.
- 5** Rats do not like change, and prefer areas and gardens where items are long standing and undisturbed. If you keep your garden trimmed and tidy it can help to discourage rodents.
- 6** If you hear noises in the loft, don't presume it is birds! Rats, mice and squirrels will all nest in loft spaces, and because rodents need to gnaw to keep their teeth from overgrowing, their presence within properties can lead to fires, floods, explosions and electrocutions.
- 7** Bird activity on your property can be incredibly damaging. Pigeons for example carry a host of diseases, can damage property with their acidic droppings, and their nests are reservoirs of infestation for insects. If you are having problems with birds, make sure you consult a professional.

If you think you have a problem, act quickly!

- 8** Keep your properties well maintained. Mice for example can squeeze through a gap the size of a pen top, so try to ensure any obvious gaps are blocked to make intrusion as difficult as possible.
- 9** Insects such as bed bugs can be picked up in luggage or on second hand furniture. By carefully inspecting luggage and furniture you may be able to avoid long and costly treatments to get rid of these pests.
- 10** It's easy to get out of your depth when trying to control pests as their treatment is often specialised and complicated. Every year members of the public not only waste millions of pounds on failed treatments they've administered themselves, but in some cases are prosecuted for the inhumane treatment of pests that they trap and kill themselves – if you don't know the law or what you are doing, employ a professional member of BPCA to guarantee safe, effective and legal treatment.

Why choose a BPCA member?

By choosing a BPCA member you are ensuring the use of a contractor who can provide a professional and consistent service.

All BPCA members meet our strict membership criteria, hold the relevant pest control insurances, and are fully qualified and trained to deal with your pest problems.





SUMMARY

Although this report provides an accurate review of all pest control treatments completed by all local authorities in the UK, this doesn't take into account the treatments undertaken by private companies and the public themselves.

This means our report figures significantly underestimate the full scale of pest numbers in the UK. The Association will be undergoing further analysis of the UK market to give a full overview in due course.

Despite the economic pressures to date, we still see the majority of UK local authorities continuing to provide professional pest services. Although for how long they will be able to do so is still to be answered. Even with further cutbacks on the horizon in response to national austerity measures, we have seen what could well be the start of a further decline in in-house service provision and increase in the proportion of local authorities no longer providing any sort of pest control service.

The Association has significant concerns about the ongoing viability of this stance where public health issues are concerned, and our position is that any local authority which has or intends to reduce its public health pest control should ensure that this remit is picked up by professional pest controllers, and that its residents are aware to avoid the unscrupulous and amateurs which may prey on disadvantaged consumers.

In order to address this, we suggest local authorities only recommend commercial pest control companies which are members of the British Pest Control Association – a full listing is available from www.bpca.org.uk



the full report



Do you want to know more?

Then look no further, and you can have your own copy of the research reports for free, allowing you to use this as a benchmarking and analysis tool for your own organisation. Simply go to www.bpca.org.uk/research to download the documents.

Do you need further analysis?

We can provide you with further, in-depth analysis of a specific region, district, authority or pest, if required. Please contact us with your research specifications by sending an email to enquiry@bpca.org.uk

The future of the report

We will produce this report annually, so the industry has a clear benchmarking tool and accurate assessment of the UK's pest control treatments, local authority services and level of pest species.

Find out more at

www.bpca.org.uk/research



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