



## GULL DETERRENCE

Dealing with urban aerial pests



Also in this issue:

**Public health pest  
control demand up**

**MOTH CONTROL**

**IS YOUR INSURANCE  
UP TO SCRATCH?**



**Size doesn't matter**  
Small companies punching  
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**A recipe for success**  
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### alexo

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# Welcome to alexo

Welcome to Issue One of the British Pest Control Association's new magazine, **alexo**. The magazine has many aims, but just one purpose – to help you control your public health pest issues with confidence.

Pests are incredibly well-designed when it comes to causing disruption and damage. Now there's a publication that's just as well-designed to help you commission the services you need to keep them under control: **alexo**, for authoritative direction on the public health pest challenges facing your industry.

**alexo** is packed full of incisive articles by leading experts, the latest weapons in the fight for pest control across the UK, and both successful solutions and perfect providers. It's all you need to tackle your organisation's pest problems... head on.

Each issue will be sent to a readership of over 5,000 customers who use pest control in their business. There is no precedent for a magazine of this type – not even the biggest pest control servicing companies produce a magazine specifically for end users. BPCA is leading the sector by being first to market with a publication of this type.

## So why 'alexo'?

**alexo** means 'I protect', or 'I defend' – which we think sums up exactly what the magazine is all about. The focus for the magazine and BPCA is public health protection and promotion. We'll try to focus on solutions not problems, and prevention not pests.

This publication is designed to be read by you: facilities managers, architects, local authorities, environmental health officers, retailers, food manufacturers, auditors, main contractors, premises managers and opinion formers.

BPCA asked people like you what they want from a pest controller. The short answer is 'professionalism' – you want to know the companies you use for pest control are proper and legitimate businesses, trained

to deliver results and minimise risk. **alexo** is designed to demonstrate how the BPCA supply chain delivers exactly that, and both inform and educate so you can improve your public health pest control.

The magazine will deliver incisive articles, news on pest prevention and also take a look at a range of sectors to help you minimise risk, and maximise control. We've started at the point where research shows end users have the most problems: getting the right pest controller for the job, and ensuring the contract is right.

We've included an article on the importance of choosing the right pest controller for your needs. Many companies automatically reach for the larger companies in times of need, but it's worth considering smaller independents, who can offer benefits of their own.

The tendering process is vital, and our article on pages 34-35 identifies how to get it right and avoid headaches later.

There's also a reminder on why pest control is important. Did you know most insurance policies specifically exclude damage from pests? So if a rat gnaws through a water pipe and floods your premises, you may not be covered. We look at how you can avoid these issues, minimise risk, and in the event of a pest problem, the questions you need to ask.

We've also got a feature on one of the most visible and potentially damaging pests at present, gulls.

And finally, we need your help. What would you like to see featured in the next issue of **alexo**? What pest problems do you face, and how would you like us to help? Let us know by completing the reader survey – you could win a Kindle ereader in our prize draw.

Thanks for reading.



*“ We'll try to focus on solutions not problems, and prevention not pests. ”*



**Simon Forrester**  
BPCA chief executive  
[simon@bpca.org.uk](mailto:simon@bpca.org.uk)

[www.alexo.org.uk](http://www.alexo.org.uk)  
[www.bpca.org.uk](http://www.bpca.org.uk)



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- Innovation with digital reporting

# Bed bug doggy detective

Vermikil Pest Control Services has recently welcomed Chase into their business.



Chase is a two year old rescue beagle who has been given a new purpose: to find hidden bed bugs! Chase was trained at the Excelsis Detections training facility in Florida USA, which involved hundreds of hours' training over months for the detection of live bed bugs, being able to discriminate against dead bed bugs and shed skins. Chase has come to the UK and both Chase and his handler, Turan Basri, who also had to attend the training

facility, have become a NESDCA (National Entomology Scent Detection Canine Association) certificated team.

Vermikil's team is the first NESDCA certified team within Europe with any pest control company, and the only current certified team in the UK. Ongoing daily training and yearly assessments ensure that the team are fully qualified to provide a bed bug dog detection service.

NESDCA claims that by employing a certified bed bug detection canine it takes no more than five minutes to inspect a typical hotel room, where a pest control technician could take much longer, and facilitates the search for hidden bed bugs that may not necessarily be easy to locate.

According to research by the University of Florida, canine bed bug detection can be more accurate compared to the success rate of a pest control technician. Due to the behaviour and size of

bed bugs they often hide in inaccessible areas, such as behind skirting and within furniture.

The dog's nose is cutting edge technology and a properly trained and certified detection dog is recognised in US courts as a scientific instrument.

Whilst there is lots of research and bed bug dog teams in the US, the idea is still relatively new to the UK. BPCA is currently looking at introducing a code of practice and guidelines for the use of animals in pest control, but these are in the very early stages of development.

Proactive searching of a commercial property before any bed bug problems arise ensures that reputations remain intact. Good reputations are hard to earn and bad news travels fast, so the Vermikil team recommends periodic inspections.

[www.vermikil.com](http://www.vermikil.com)

[www.nesdca.com](http://www.nesdca.com)

To see Chase in action go to <http://on.fb.me/jf5W3n>



## ITV TRAPS PESTOKILL

Adrian Edmondson has recently been filming with Pestokill's technician John Bennett.

ITV have spent three months making a new documentary series – Ade in Britain – about the food and traditions of Britain which will be aired in November of this year.

Pestokill's expertise was called upon when producers wanted to look at traditional country ways, skills and trades. John spent time demonstrating how traditional nets used to catch rabbits are made, as well as filming in the field to demonstrate the very traditional art of using ferrets and nets as a pest control method to control rabbits.

Pestokill's operations director, Cliff Eccles, said "Such traditional techniques can still be extremely effective in the field and, as a business, its important our technicians retain skills that have been employed for years. Obviously, pest control has moved on, but it's important to still consider traditional methods available as part of an integrated approach to pest management."

[www.pestokill.co.uk](http://www.pestokill.co.uk)



THE QUEEN'S AWARDS  
FOR ENTERPRISE



## RUSSELL IPM CELEBRATE THE QUEEN'S AWARD

The Queen's Awards for Enterprise, the highest official UK awards for British businesses, have recognised the achievements of Russell IPM with an International Trade award for 2011.

Russell IPM is a leading manufacturer of pheromone-based insect monitoring and control systems in the UK, and one of the largest in Europe. It has been active in the field of integrated pest management exporting over 60% of its products for over 20 years, providing green solutions in over 30 countries.

On the news of this recognition, Diana Al-Zaidi said: "This award is thanks to the hard work put in by every single member of staff matched by that of our partners around the world."

As founder Shakir Al-Zaidi explained: "From day one we have invested in people, technology and new markets. I wish all our technical sales teams could be with us right now to celebrate this achievement. It's their hard work that has provided the basis of our success."

Well done to everyone at Russell IPM.

[www.russellipm-storedproductsinsects.com](http://www.russellipm-storedproductsinsects.com)



## US BED BUGS ON THE UP

Dense urban populations, major movements of people and increasing restrictions on residual insecticides have contributed to a major resurgence in North American bed bug problems in recent years.

Add to this an alarming level of resistance to key insecticides and it's not difficult to see why a good 75% of US pest controllers rated bed bugs as their single most difficult-to-control pest in a recent benchmark National Pest Management Association (NPMA) study with the University of Kentucky. This has risen from less than 60% in an almost identical survey conducted in 2008.

This study underlines the scale of the recent increase in the US bed bug challenge, as does the growing extent to which infestations are being reported in every conceivable location.

"The recognition that bed bug infestations can extend well beyond bedrooms is vital for pest controllers everywhere," stresses BASF Pest Control Solutions' insect management specialist, Roland Twydell. "It highlights the fact that the pest can be carried over great distances on luggage, clothing and second-hand furniture, amongst other methods. It's important to extend inspections and, if necessary, treatments to other parts of premises found to be infested and, indeed, to locations not normally associated with the pest.

"The sheer scale of inspection and treatment work required means many initial US bed bug treatments are currently taking five hours or more, with an average of between two and three



treatments needed to get an infestation under control."

Under these circumstances, Roland Twydell finds it hardly surprising that, rather than relying on their standard pest control terms, the majority of US companies now employ separate contracts for bed bug treatment. Building managers are encouraged to discuss the issue with

their pest controller to ensure prompt eradication.

[www.pestcontrol.basf.co.uk](http://www.pestcontrol.basf.co.uk)

## BED BUG RESEARCH - INFESTATIONS WANTED

Researchers at the University of Sheffield are looking for a hotel, hostel, block of flats, or student housing etc, that has a widespread bed bug infestation.

The objective of their work is to use DNA profiling to determine the origin and spread of bed bug infestations within buildings. The work will not interfere with any planned pest control at the site. Their plan is simply to visit the building immediately before treatment, and collect bed bugs from as many different rooms or flats as possible.

The University is able to respond quickly to a request, will co-operate fully with the site and the pest control organisation, and will observe strict confidentiality.

Anyone who may have a suitable infested site and is interested in collaborating in this research should contact Toby Fountain on 0113 222 0113 or [t.fountain@sheffield.ac.uk](mailto:t.fountain@sheffield.ac.uk)

## BPCA CLAMPS DOWN ON IDENTITY THEFT

Identity theft is becoming more common as unscrupulous businesses try to fool consumers.

Like many other respected and trusted brands, the BPCA logo is no exception. As a widely recognised symbol of quality, the BPCA logo is being misused by more and more companies that have never been BPCA members or have left membership.

BPCA membership officer

Rachel Eyre said: "We have noticed an increase in the illegitimate use of the BPCA logo by companies who want the kudos of membership, but don't want to or can't meet the BPCA membership criteria, or of course don't want to pay for it!

"BPCA takes a tough line where companies do not remove the logo upon request. Companies illegally using the logo are given a deadline by which to remove the logo from their website, business stationery, literature and vans. Failure to do so results in an automatic referral

by BPCA to Trading Standards, and legal action by the association."

So, when appointing a pest controller, always look for the BPCA logo and check it's being used correctly.

To confirm a company's current membership, or to report known misuse or passing off by non-members contact [rachel@bpca.org.uk](mailto:rachel@bpca.org.uk) or call 01332 225 112.

All information supplied will remain confidential.

[www.bpca.org.uk](http://www.bpca.org.uk)



## Dead flies – dead quick!

With the fly season open, the fly's natural breeding grounds, such as waste disposal sites, are under pressure. Flies are a clear public health and nuisance pest, and one innovative method of control is to use a roller to apply formulations.

Quick Bayt® is a paint-on granular bait formulation for rapid control of flies from Bayer Environmental Science, and has been granted approval for indoor use where waste is stored.

This means that Quick Bayt® can now be used indoors in waste disposal sites and also green waste disposal sites, and affords users an even greater scope for use to existing fly problem areas.

According to Bayer, Quick Bayt® controls flies within minutes of contact and provides up to six weeks efficacy in the field. Its granules are mixed with water to form a paste that can easily be applied with a paint roller or brush.

BPCA advice is to always appoint a professional contractor (see page 37).

[www.pestcontrol-expert.com](http://www.pestcontrol-expert.com)



## SPOT A WASP – DONATE MONEY TO CHARITY

Spring being unseasonably warm and dry has led to wasps emerging early from their overwintering places. Because wasps have started building their nests earlier than usual this year Rentokil technicians have been discovering super-sized nests.

An average nest is the size of a football and can be home to up to 25,000 wasps.

To help manage the potential threats posed by wasps and to be more wasp aware, Rentokil have created UKWaspWatch, the first ever interactive map to log wasp hotspots around the country.

Rentokil are supporting The Anaphylaxis Campaign by donating 20p to the charity whenever a person logs a wasp or wasps' nest sighting onto the UKWaspWatch map throughout the wasp season (June to September).

[www.ukwaspwatch.co.uk](http://www.ukwaspwatch.co.uk)



## BED BUG DETECTIVE

Bed Bug detection is now made easier with this electronic 'CO2' highly sensitive sniffing device. It's like having a canine detective in your pocket.

If you don't have a dog the BBD100 is the next best solution.

Find those hard to locate pockets of Bed Bugs and learn the strategies for becoming a Bed Bug Detective.



[findbedbugsnow.co.uk](http://findbedbugsnow.co.uk)

[WWW.HEATANDGO.CO.UK](http://WWW.HEATANDGO.CO.UK) 0845 233 2847

## SURVEY SAYS COORDINATION IS KEY TO RODENT CONTROL

Local authority economies are already threatening public health, reveals the latest national rodent survey report from BASF and NPTA. And current unprecedented national austerity measures are set to make the position markedly worse.

The benchmark annual report published in March shows the largest yearly fall in recorded local authority rat and mouse treatments since the survey was instituted in 1999. At the same time, it reveals much of this decline results from changes in charging practice rather than any decline

in infestation levels.

Householders, businesses and communities are urged to work much harder together to discourage rodents. At the same time, rat and mouse control must increasingly be focused on only the most effective treatments using the best available baits and baiting practices. Hardest of all perhaps, private businesses and public sector organisations need to co-ordinate their control activities far better across communities. Copies of the survey are available from: [www.pestcontrol.basf.co.uk](http://www.pestcontrol.basf.co.uk) [www.npta.org.uk](http://www.npta.org.uk)



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## green compliance

### Location, location, location...

A recent survey of customers revealed that what makes business premises more or less prone to pest infestation is location, location, location...

Green Compliance Pest & Environmental Division Sales Director Andrew Hollyer warns "When it comes to choosing business premises it is vitally important to ensure you put the right investment into planned preventative maintenance, which must include an appropriate level of pest control. If you fail to do so the impact on your business could potentially be critically damaging."

The survey highlighted the five main factors to consider when choosing a property and allocating a budget for pest control and prevention:

- 1 Location of premises**  
proximity to waste tips, water and railway embankments
- 2 Pest history**  
check local council pest control records and speak to neighbours
- 3 Building condition**  
the age, building fabric,

general condition and any outstanding repairs

**4 Hygiene issues**  
you are affected by not only your own business sector and waste management, but also those of the businesses around you

**5 External factors**  
outside your control, eg. general maintenance of neighbouring properties and their pest control practices.

The mix of these is individual to every property so businesses need to ensure they appoint a contractor that will provide a tailored, flexible service to protect them and their business – not one size fits all. Annual pest risk assessments will ensure the frequency of site visits is changed as your needs require. It will reduce on-site complaints and call outs, raising confidence at site level and also reducing your additional contract costs.

[www.greencomplianceplc.com](http://www.greencomplianceplc.com)

Watch out for the next issue of **alexo**, November 2011, the construction special - see page 47.



## PEST CONTROLLER'S DAILY DICE WITH DEATH

Pest controller Barrie Montgomery dices with death every day he deals with wasps – because he is allergic to their sting.

He had already been working for his employer, Graham Pest Control, for around two years, and had been stung on several occasions during that time, when he became allergic to wasps. The discovery was dramatic.

"I got stung on a job," said Barrie. "I was driving to the next job when I started to feel a bit funny. My hands and feet were burning up. My face started to feel hot and flushed.

"I happened to be driving past Arbroath Infirmary so I just popped in. By the time I did I'd already gone into full anaphylactic shock."

At the time Barrie was unaware of the life-threatening condition that causes throat constriction and breathing difficulties. If not treated within minutes, a sufferer will die.

Despite the risk his job presents, Barrie says there's no chance he will give up the job he loves. He says he could leave the wasp jobs to colleagues and chase other pests but he just wants to get on with tackling the stingers!

Barrie's story highlights the deadly risk wasps pose. Wasps' nests should not be discounted as 'minor' pest problems. Wasps are categorised as public health pests and any business who ignores a nest is potentially putting the health of customers, employees and the general public at severe risk.

[www.grahampestcontrol.com](http://www.grahampestcontrol.com)  
[www.anaphylaxis.org.uk](http://www.anaphylaxis.org.uk)

See the story at STV news <http://bit.ly/iThwK7>



# Havoc caused by increase in bird problems

Cleankill (Environmental Services) Ltd, which operates across London and the South East, is experiencing more calls than ever before from businesses with bird problems.

The calls range from businesses whose staff are getting attacked by aggressive gulls while trying to carry out maintenance on rooftops, to pigeons causing health hazards by covering fire escapes with slippy droppings.

Other more unusual calls include an office block in London where gulls were picking up pebbles and dropping them on the glass atrium roof causing thousands of pounds worth of damage.

At a school in Bexhill where an expensive Eden Project-style roof has been installed, gulls were pecking holes in the plastic causing it to deflate with bills for repairs, again, running up to several thousand pounds.

Many of the calls Cleankill receives have to be referred to Natural England as there are now only certain circumstances when pest controllers can deal with problem birds, unless pigeons are involved.

Cleankill Director Jon Whitehead explained: "Gulls, starlings and sparrows all used to be classified as pest birds, along with pigeons, but now there are only very specific instances when we can deal with them and Herring Gulls are now actually a protected species."

The company has also just finished dealing with their largest ever infestation of parakeets after being called to a block of flats in Greenwich where the birds were causing damage to the building.

Managing Director Paul Bates said: "This is the worst case we've seen since legislation was introduced allowing us to 'proof' against parakeets. The birds were entering the building through air ducts and, once inside, were chewing on everything in their reach including joists and ducting."

Since January 2010, parakeets have been classified as pests by Natural England which means pest controllers can now legally respond in certain circumstances.

Paul went on to explain: "We are told that these tropical birds are thriving here because of global warming and we are expecting lots more calls as businesses discover the damage parakeets are causing and the numbers increase.

"They may only be about 16" in height, but parakeets' beaks are very large and extremely powerful which means they can do a lot of damage in a short amount of time.

"Our philosophy with any pest control work we do is to be as eco-friendly as possible and prevent problems happening in the first place. We are used to working with pigeons but, with parakeets, we are learning as we go while working under guidance from Natural England and the RSPB."

Now, in areas where there are large colonies of parakeets, businesses are being advised to check their roof spaces and buildings for damage. [www.cleankill.co.uk](http://www.cleankill.co.uk)

**For more information on bird management, turn to the feature article on page 24.**



## EIGHTH CONSECUTIVE ROSPA GOLD MEDAL AWARD FOR ROKILL



Rokill have recently been awarded their eighth consecutive Gold Medal Award by RoSPA, the Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents.

Brian Duffin, Chief Technical Officer, seen pictured accepting the award from Michael Hampson, RoSPA Trustee, said "I am thrilled to have accepted this award on behalf of our team.

To have achieved an eighth consecutive award is testament to the professionalism and pride our operatives take in their everyday work. The award, coupled with our compliance to quality, environmental and occupational health and safety standards goes a long way to providing transparency to clients and potential clients."

Rokill also holds the Queen's Royal Warrant for Pest Control Services.

[www.rokill.co.uk](http://www.rokill.co.uk)  
[www.rospa.org.uk](http://www.rospa.org.uk)



There are many reasons why pest control is a must in any business environment. Everyone's heard of Bridget Jones's Diary, but have you ever wondered what part pest control played in ensuring Helen Fielding's romantic novel hit the big screen?

# The show must go on!



Within the client portfolio of Beaver Pest Control is a very well established costumier, supplying West End productions as well as TV and films, such as Bridget Jones's Diary. The site is over 1,200 sq ft and packed to the rafters with vintage, rare, period clothes, shoes, hats and accessories making an asset not only vast in size, but of major commercial significance to the business.

Their success means racks of clothes come and go in a daily, continuous flow so it's imperative to have both preventative and monitoring measures in place.

For a business such as this even a few moths can spell disaster when any one article of vintage clothing could easily realise £100,000 at a specialist auction.



As part of preventative measures built into the service agreement, Beaver Pest Control carry out fogging treatment four times a year using a machine that disperses fine insecticide droplets in an intensive, dense fog. This fog penetrates deep into cracks and crevices as well as the fabric of the clothes without damage or

residual effect, meaning moths have no chance at all. The machine gets very hot during normal operation, so use by a properly trained operative is essential.

This treatment, supported with 'normal' spray treatment of cracks, crevices and shelving provides a comprehensive, preventative service. However, there is also ongoing monitoring designed to identify at the earliest possible opportunity the presence of moths ensuring infestations are not allowed to take hold.

Consideration also has to be given to minimising business interruption, and safeguarding contractors and customers' staff. So, fogging treatments have to be carefully planned.

Fortunately for film and TV fans, the comprehensive pest control contract in place means that your viewing should continue uninterrupted. And as for Bridget Jones's underpants – despite their vast size, they remain moth free!

Beaver Pest Control service a wide variety of sectors, from local authorities, housing associations and sport venues to many spheres of the food and hospitality industries.

If you are interested in a FREE quote for an ongoing pest control contract or just a one off job for rodent, insect or bird control please call them now on 020 8355 3443 or for further information visit their website [www.pestcontrolservices.co.uk](http://www.pestcontrolservices.co.uk)

[www.pestcontrolservices.co.uk](http://www.pestcontrolservices.co.uk)  
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**Pests have the potential to:**

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- Damage products and foodstuffs, rendering them worthless
- Damage property, causing fires and flooding
- Ruin reputations, leading to loss of business and prosecution

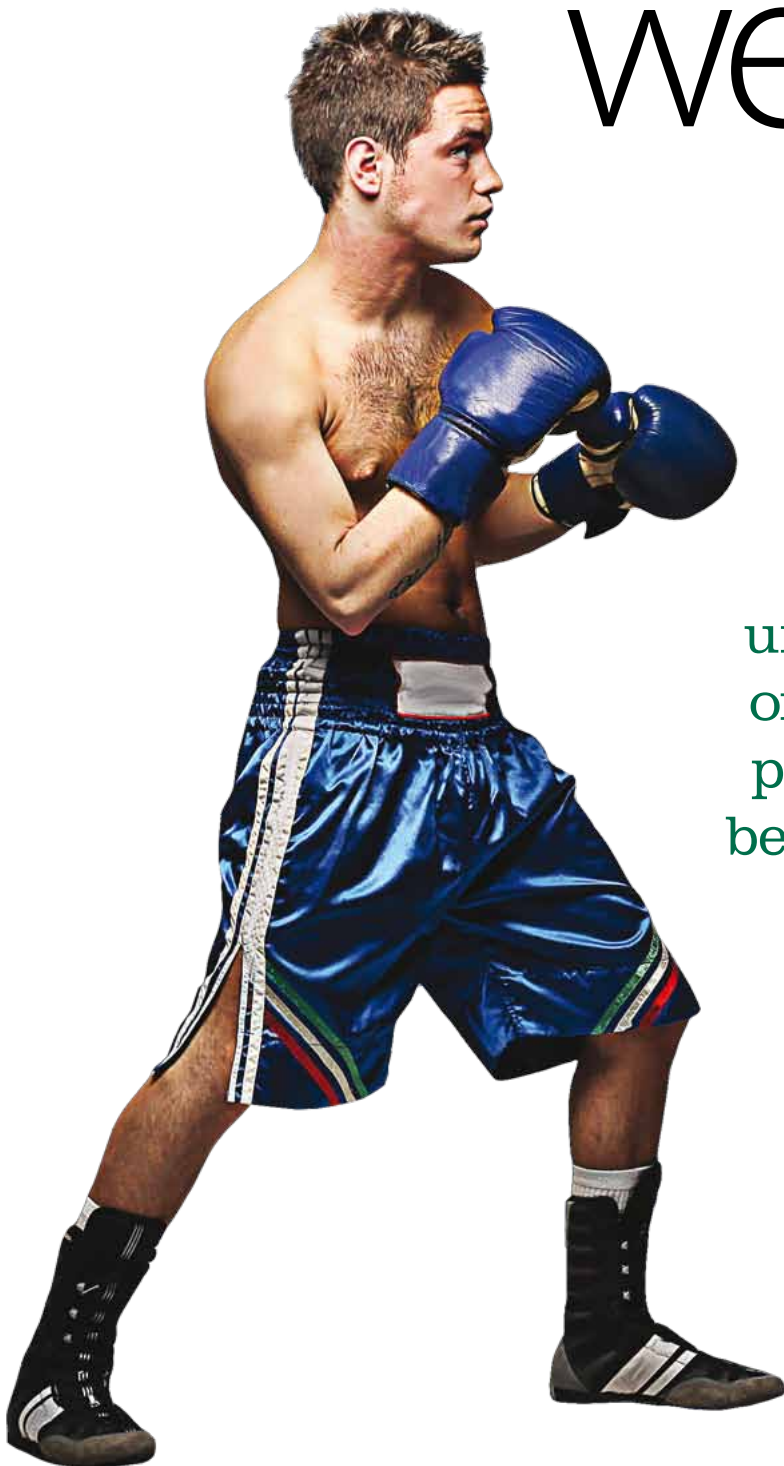


**Beaver Pest Control has been established since 1990. Through high quality service we have expanded to be one of the largest specialist pest control companies in the UK.**

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# Punching above their weight



“Clients need to understand the benefits of both small and large pest control companies before choosing one type over the other.”



**There used to be a saying 'nobody got fired for buying IBM'. It's become almost a mantra within procurement to buy from national or global brands in order to minimise risk and get the best service. Simon Forrester, BPCA chief executive, investigates if this is still true for pest control contracts.**

The pest control market has changed considerably over recent years, with larger companies who struggle to grow portfolio and turnover organically shifting their focus towards acquisition as the solution. Shrinkage within what is already a small nationwide servicing pool has an impact on end-users. As numbers shrink, the large company monopoly increases further. "This dominance of the market has the potential to allow the large company to increase margins at the expense of the end-user. Whilst takeovers and buy-outs are nothing new, there has been a noticeable acceleration in numbers over the last three years" says Henry Mott of Conquer Pest Control.

The national pest control companies are, almost without exception, part of a multi-service group tagged onto much larger operations such as cleaning or facilities management, with pest control being only a minor part of the business. As a result, their focus on the pest control function is often relatively small and customers need to be certain they are not just an account number, but a valued customer. So, is localism the way forward?

With the number of nationwide companies being so small, ignoring regional companies may be excluding a significant portfolio of industry knowledge and expertise from your decision process.

When selecting a pest control company, buyers can often assume that bigger is better and safer, with a balanced, lower risk. And research shows that once a company has selected the 'size' of pest control company, they stick with that model for many years, even when the provider changes. But just like with any commercial service it pays to

shop around, and to consider companies outside those you'd normally pick.

Large companies have clear benefits – they are tried and tested, and give excellent risk management within the supply chain. They have access to huge amounts of technical data and integrated solutions that encompass building management, cleaning, landscaping, the lot. They also provide multiple support mechanisms including replacement staff at short notice, should your usual technician go AWOL.

However, the advent of technology has dramatically shrunk the gap between the capabilities of small and large pest control operators, with access to supplier data banks, online networks of independent pest controllers, electronic capture and storage of visit reports and contract management database systems. Clients need to understand the benefits of both small and large pest control companies before choosing one type over the other.

This 'independents together' approach is already working well across the country in a range of commercial businesses, from fast food chains, leisure groups and retail outlets, through to warehousing and equipment suppliers. They have recognised that there is an alternative to the big providers, and see the results in terms of both enhanced service delivery, levels of control and cost.

A phone survey with a range of pest control buyers identified ten key service level performance indicators they look for in a pest control business. We set out how independent pest controllers measure up...

/continued over...



## 1 Response time

Small, local businesses are usually quick to respond to and solve problems due to a smaller chain of command. Top management is typically available 'at the end of the phone' and so able to personally handle any situation promptly. Larger businesses can be slower to respond to problems and have a long and sometimes complex structure of command. Additionally, some 'corporate' policies and procedures may slow down any processes for resolving issues and snags that come up in the course of routine work. Similarly, independent businesses often work to a different time culture than corporate organisations, in that they can afford additional time with clients, without the pressure of meeting a set number of calls in a day.

## 2 Personal attention

When choosing a supplier, the culture of a pest control company is often overlooked. The small business is built on the foundation of being able to give time and attention to its customers. Technicians often have the ability to make decisions and vary the rules depending on their client's needs, which may not be possible in a large company where standardisation is important.

The smaller contractor often has a greater stake in the success of the contractual relationship and is willing to spend time, and commit high-level personal attention to achieve this.

Martin Harvey of Harvey Environmental Services said "People are amazed at the level of customer relationship management a company of our size is able to offer. Unlike many larger organisations we provide continuity with a very low turnover in our front line personnel, always ensure follow ups are made and our business departments are UK based, accessible and approachable. We pride ourselves in the ownership of our service levels and this really pays dividends for our customers. Business is going great, so we must be doing something right."

## 3 Specialisation

Many small businesses are small because they are specialists, experts focusing on a particular area of pest control. This gives them a competitive edge over larger companies by doing well at tasks that are ignored or of no interest to larger companies. There are some excellent small pest control companies out there with huge expertise in specific pest species (e.g. bed bugs, pharaoh ants), particular areas of operation (e.g. grain silos, cleanrooms) or specialists in a particular niche (soil association certified, fumigation).

Specialisation aside, technicians employed by small businesses are also capable of handling a variety of situations as the resource levels available to them mean small business owners invest in training across a broad range of pest control problems i.e. they don't have to contact a head office budget holder for authorisation.

## 4 Ease of communication

There is often a single point of direct contact offered by a small business which eases communication for the customers and

'comforts' them in supplier relationships. The individual is more likely to know the customer's history, able to make a judgment call when needed and well versed with each subsection within the business, primarily because of the flatter organisational structure. This also improves accountability.

## 5 Change management

Small businesses can change direction quickly. Training can be quickly procured and delivered with better, immediate reach throughout the organisation. A large company will need to invest a lot of time, money and effort to make even a small change due to its organisational structure. Despite this, some small businesses are resistant to change, and may not be receptive to new technologies or methods of working.

## 6 Autonomy

A small business enables fast feedback from field technicians to management of 'on the ground' conditions, e.g. an increase in localised infestations. This allows for unbiased, almost immediate changes to servicing, delivery of information and prevention levels and techniques. Decisions can be made faster, work can carry on uninterrupted and employee productivity, and service levels, are increased.

## 7 Financial aspects

Cost is a key driver, but not the main driver. Also, ask yourself the question – cost for what? What are you actually buying?

Larger companies have increased overheads which are reflected in the prices. They do however offer significant economies of scale. Larger companies set employee targets, for example in add-on sales, whereas smaller organisations may be less inclined to set such goals.

## 8 Brand

For any pest control organisation, reputation is key. But many small independent companies operate within a geographic area, and so brand is central to personal recommendations, repeat business and developing trust. Steve Walsh of Walsh Pest Control said "Trust is one of the hardest concepts to prove or sell. It's earned, and big brands have it by definition, so any independent will always be trying to catch up. If you have demonstrable industry qualifications, the proper insurance and you can represent yourself to a customer, then trust can be earned, but it takes time, and of course results! These days if your prices are keen enough (and service contracts aren't in force), then customers will sometimes give you a chance, then it is up to you to show them a professional and dependable service."

David Etherington from Pestek in Leeds said "If a potential client asks about service delivery, I say that it's my business and my reputation on the line if things go wrong. I have to get things right whereas a larger company technician is just doing his job - he is probably overworked and underpaid. He'll have a list of jobs as long as your arm to squeeze into his day whereas



when they call me the job takes as long as it takes - and will be done correctly.”

## 9 Support

While large companies have access to extensive in-house technical support and back-up should your usual technician not turn up, small companies are joining forces to help each other out. Henry Mott of Conquer Pest Control said “I now work with other independent companies to cover each others’ work and we regularly cover contracts for other BPCA members in the event of holiday, other absence or the unexpected.”

Richard Moseley, BPCA technical manager said “BPCA servicing companies are only allowed to use other BPCA members to sub-contract their work, so clients can rest easy that work is always being carried out by companies meeting the same standard.”

This is further enhanced by the density of service staff within specific regions, with localised knowledge, which is superior in many of the smaller operators to national providers.

And now technical support is also available to all. Small companies obtain much of their technical support from higher up the supply chain, with manufacturers and distributors offering excellent support schemes, or through the BPCA.

## 10 Product choice

On occasion technicians working for larger contractors will have a prescribed, sometimes limited range of products available to them, whereas independent pest controllers have the freedom to source professional products from a wide range of suppliers.

Martin Harvey of Harvey Environmental Services said “Being restricted to certain types of pesticides and hardware would be counter-productive to us. It’s more important to use something that works quickly, safely and efficiently in a specific situation rather than trying to ‘shoehorn’ a solution out of what may not work very well but it’s what is available in the stores.

Standardisation is great if you’re an accountant or a buyer, but in reality getting the job right first time is the cheapest option.”

“Larger companies set employee targets, for example in add-on sales, whereas smaller organisations may be less inclined to set such goals.”



So, in summary...

Don’t immediately discount the small, independent company. As BPCA members, they will be as well trained as the majors, often having prior experience within a large company themselves. Their customer service levels will be excellent, and they’ll give a quick response, with instant access to senior level employees. When your contract is due for renewal, consider the range of options open to you.

**Remember, size isn’t important – it’s how well you’re serviced that counts.**



Simon Forrester joined BPCA in August last year. He has over 16 years’ experience in association management, and was part of the team behind the award-winning magazine Interiors Focus, aimed at promoting fit-out contractors. Simon has also spent many years writing articles for magazines and the media, focusing on developing member awareness among customers.

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# Pest fact or fiction

**FICTION** Bed bugs are too small to see, so you can't tell whether you have them until it's too late.



**FACT** Bed bugs are visible to the naked eye from egg through to adult stages. An adult bed bug is about the size of an apple seed. Fully sated ones can be even larger. It's mainly a matter of knowing where to look for them.

**FICTION** Rats and mice are nocturnal (only active at night).



**FACT** Rats and mice are more active when there is less danger about, which in many cases is at night. But they can dart about during daylight hours as well to secure food and shelter, especially if they have learned there are routes they can take and areas they can go where they will not be challenged.

Regardless of the time, their eyes and ears are always alert to the slightest sounds or movements.

**FICTION** Fleas will die off quickly if they have no host.



**FACT** Fleas are one of nature's survivors. A flea cocoon can remain dormant in furniture or carpets for up to two years until disturbed, at which point fleas will hatch and start to bite. Also known as 'estate agent's leg'!

**FICTION** Rats can't climb.



**FACT** The common rat is a very agile climber and his agility makes it easy for him to utilise pipe work to scale buildings. He usually lives in sewers and burrows, but when the opportunity affords itself he will readily take to the attics of buildings where warm conditions make it a welcome place to set up home.

**FICTION** You can never get rid of cockroaches, only control them.



**FACT** You can eradicate cockroaches from a building and maintain it cockroach-free by using a detailed pest management programme.

**FICTION** Ants won't cross a chalk line.



**FACT** Ants will react to anything new, and chalk holds no particular significance in this.

**FICTION**

The best form of pest control is a cat.



**FACT**

Cats are sometimes good 'mousers', but much depends on variables such as the animal's temperament, diet, training and environment. It's no substitute for a pest control contract – and Environmental Health may frown on it! Cats often catch mice simply to play with them and then release them, often indoors!



**FICTION** If you see rats or mice in the daytime, there must be a large population.



**FACT** Individual rats and mice sleep only for short periods and might move about at any time of the day or night. They are more visible during the daytime, and so even small populations may give themselves away by sightings when people are up or businesses are open.

A better indication is the amount of signs in the area, such as burrows, droppings and damage.

**FICTION** Paper mites and fleas are common problems of modern offices and workspaces.



**FACT** It's very unlikely to be paper mites. The problem is more than likely to be caused by a statically charged atmosphere lacking in humidity. The resultant effect is as if a person has been bitten; the static electricity picks up fibres and projects them like a spear into the skin, hence the complaint of bites, sometimes thought to be fleas.



## We bust some of the fictions and legends around common UK pest species...

**FICTION** Bed bugs are only found living in beds.



**FACT** Bed bugs thrive in any place that's warm and close to a sedentary food source. They're found in cracks and crevices of beds and bedding as well as in nightstands, chairs, couches, wheelchairs, and nearby electronics and electrical appliances.

**FICTION** Rats and mice are winter pests.



**FACT** Rats and mice can breed all year with adequate food, shelter and warm-temperature opportunities. They cannot hibernate, and will spend more time inside burrows or structures during cold weather, but still explore, looking for food and shelter. Invasions of buildings may be more noticeable in colder months, when their preferred food, grain, is no longer available in the fields.

**FICTION** Rats and mice avoid water.



**FACT** The Norway Rat is an excellent swimmer and can live along streams and rivers. They catch crayfish, frogs and other aquatic animals to supplement their food. Rats can also survive being carried long distances in floods or river currents. They will cross ditches, swim drains and stretches of sewer flow to get where they are going. Even mice will swim, and can withstand immersion in water for many hours.

**FICTION** Bed bugs find their hosts by smelling blood.



**FACT** Bed bugs are little carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>) detectors. Humans and other mammals respire CO<sub>2</sub>, and when they're stationary – asleep or sitting in one place for long periods of time – CO<sub>2</sub> 'clouds' form. Bed bugs detect these clouds.

**FICTION** Fleas can jump 100 times their own length.



**FACT** It's actually 150 times, the equivalent of you jumping the Gherkin building. If you could jump this high, you'd need a special hard shell like the flea to survive the impact of landing.

**FICTION** To catch a mouse, bait your traps with cheese.



**FACT** Despite what Tom and Jerry would have you believe, mice prefer food sources high in sugars and fat like peanut butter, bacon and chocolate.

**FICTION** There is one rat per person living in many of our cities.



**FACT** This is a soundbite that sounds good to politicians or those cautioning about rats, but it has no basis in fact. Rat populations change according to their ability to survive in areas and the amount of food and shelter available.

The one-rat-per-person claim first appeared in a British publication from 1909 referring to rats in the English countryside. An educated guess was made that there was an average of one rat per acre. Coincidentally at the time, there were both 40 million acres of cropland and 40 million people in the country, so the one-rat-per-person figure was born.

Nobody has done the actual research in today's cities.

**FICTION** Seagulls are a common pest species.



**FACT** There are many birds that are gulls but none are named 'seagulls'.

**FICTION**

Flies eat anything.



**FACT**

Flies can only consume liquids, so they vomit on food to dissolve it, ready to eat and digest.

# aerial bait drop

Photographs courtesy of Anthony Martin



You don't need any specific expertise to understand the need for pest control in the UK. However, beyond our shores rodent infestations threaten the very survival of some of the world's most important flora, fauna and bird and animal sanctuaries on the Galápagos Islands and South Georgia Island.

In March 2011, the South Georgia Heritage Trust embarked on a seven-year project to eradicate invasive rats from the entire sub-Antarctic island of South Georgia. The Trust's Habitat Restoration Project, the largest operation of its kind in the world, aims to completely eradicate non-native rats and mice from the island, with a view to restoring South Georgia to its earlier status as one of the world's most important seabird islands.

The first stage of the ambitious initiative has been deemed a resounding success. The only effective way to eradicate rodents on an island the size of South Georgia is by air, and two helicopters were used to deliver a deadly cocktail of rat bait, specifically formulated by Bell Laboratories for the wet conditions on the island. After years of preparation, but in just 26 days, an 11 strong team of international experts, spread 48 tonnes of toxic bait over 128 square kilometres.

Speaking about the challenges and achievements of the operation, Project Director Anthony Martin, Professor of Animal Conservation at the University of Dundee, said: "Although this trial phase of the work treated only 13% of the rat-infested land area of South Georgia, it can still claim to be the largest rodent eradication operation in the world."

Operations of this nature can only be achieved by bringing together world-class expertise and assets, of which the specially formulated Bell rodenticide bait is one of the most critical.

The history of the remote and mountainous island of South Georgia has been synonymous with the destructive harvesting of first seals and then whales. But unfortunately, those sealers and whalers from the late 18th century onwards also delivered a devastating legacy to the island – the unwitting introduction of rats and mice. These have caused immense damage to the island's globally important seabird populations ever since.

Summarising the operational work, Professor Martin said, "The field team has been fantastic, the helicopters worked faultlessly, and already there are strong indications that the land within 10km of the settlement at Grytviken on South Georgia is rat free for the first time in two centuries. Native wildlife should start returning quickly and meanwhile preparations are underway to clear invasive rodents from the remainder of the island, starting in only 20 months."

Once completed, the Habitat Restoration Project will transform the wildlife and natural ecology of this stunning island, sweeping away two centuries of damage caused by mammals introduced by humans. The benefits of this project will be spectacular, and should last for millennia.

Monitoring over the next two years will confirm whether, as expected, rodents have been totally eradicated from the treated areas. The second phase of the operation to clear the remainder of the island will run from 2013 to 2015. Further monitoring will be undertaken throughout the island in 2016 and 2017 in order to ensure that no rats have survived.





Elsewhere in the Southern Hemisphere helicopters equipped with bait spreader baskets were visible in the skies above the Galápagos Islands over two weekends in January, as skilled pilots broadcast tons of bait, again specially formulated by Bell Laboratories, to rid the delicate islands ecosystems of rats. These first drops were on some of the smaller islands and islets, covering 704 hectares.

Rats were introduced to the islands aboard ships in the late 17th century and have seriously endangered some 50 bird species. January's aerial baiting was the first step in a 20-25 year process to permanently rid the Galápagos Islands of non-native rats and mice.

**“...bringing together world-class expertise and assets, of which the rodenticide bait is one of the most critical..”**

At the same time as they eradicate invasive rodents, researchers also face the challenge of protecting the island's native species. Prior to January's baiting, scientists from the University of Minnesota Raptor Centre removed 20 Galápagos Hawks from the two largest islands and held them in a specially built facility on a nearby island until the risk of them feeding on poisoned rats was over.

Now begins the critical task of monitoring for conservation targets and possible non-target species by the Galápagos National Park and the Charles Darwin Foundation.

Like Darwin's theory of evolution which grew out of his observations on the Galápagos Islands in the 1830s, this project, too, will evolve as researchers learn from their trials on these smaller islands and adapt methods to eradicate rats on larger islands such as Pinzon, where giant tortoises may one day again breed and flourish in the wild.

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# A recipe for success

**Pest control procedures in the food industry.**

Pest infestation in food premises has always been unacceptable. The risks to public health – and to reputations – are serious concerns. The Chartered Institute of Environmental Health worked with stakeholders to formulate standard practices to ensure effective control strategies. Jonathan Doyle spoke to David Oldbury, pest control consultant and Secretary of the Chartered Institute's National Pest Advisory Panel to find out how the system works in practice.



The risks posed by pests in any food handling premises are diverse – the spread of disease, damage to property (including foodstuffs), adverse public opinion, damage to reputations, the risk (and expense of) prosecution and, taken to its extreme, even closure of the premises, and perhaps with it the business. Effective pest management programmes should not only prevent the introduction of pests anywhere on a food site but also reduce the conditions that may encourage pest presence or facilitate their survival should they establish a presence.

David Oldbury is a pest control consultant, Secretary of the National Pest Advisory Panel, set up by the Chartered Institute of Environmental Health (CIEH), and has recently been awarded the honour of life membership by the British Pest Control Association. Formerly lead professional in Manchester City Council's pest control service, Oldbury says that large retailers generally have effective pest control systems in place, although there is always scope for improvement. Among the smaller businesses, however, there is often much to be done to ensure compliance with the regulations and an appropriate level of protection against pests at food premises. Even among the larger players, there is a reluctance to share best practice openly. Despite attempts to contact the major retailers, none were willing to discuss the issues on the record, demonstrating the culture around public health pest control of "don't ask, don't tell". This can be compared with the attitude in the US, where there is a very visible pest control culture.

"One of the issues from an Environmental Health Officer's point of view is that there is a tendency for pest control companies to sell monitoring contracts with a six or eight week frequency of visit", Oldbury says. "Our view is that you need as many visits as it takes initially to bring the infestation under control and then to have regular visits after that." It is something of a taboo subject among food retailers, publicly at least.

The regulatory framework (principally, the Food Safety Act 1990 and the Food Hygiene Regulations 2005 made under it) deems food unsafe if it is considered to be injurious to health or unfit for human consumption. It lays down general hygiene requirements for all food business operators. The layout, design and construction of food premises, Oldbury explains, should permit good food hygiene practices including protection against contamination and, in particular, adequate pest control.

"The procedures should be based upon the Hazard Analysis Critical Control Point (HACCP) principle generally", he says. This identifies processes, which are most hazardous, so measures can be taken to reduce risk. Pest management is part of the Good Manufacturing Practices (GMP) for food businesses,

**"Our view is that you need as many visits as it takes initially to bring the infestation under control and then to have regular visits after that."**  
**David Oldbury**



which is a prerequisite for the HACCP-based procedures in place. As an integral part of the GMPs, it should be carried out with due diligence.

"Due diligence doesn't simply fall on a pest control contractor retained by the proprietor of food premises to deal with pests", says Oldbury. The proprietor has to demonstrate good practices in his or her own right and does not abrogate responsibility by using a contractor. "At Manchester City Council, we found there was a tendency by a number of proprietors' to assume that with a pest control contractor in place they had done their bit on due diligence."

Guidelines drawn up by the National Pest Advisory Panel (NPAP) of the CIEH – Pest Control in the Food Industry, 2009 – are aimed at the food-manufacturing sector. The principles are the same for production (farmers and growers), raw material and ingredient suppliers, warehousing, distribution and retail, but the level of pest control contract specification varies.

The Guidance states: "If standards and guidelines for pest control are to achieve the aim of promoting best practice they must be practical and flexible." The standard should be risk-based, the Guidance emphasises, in order to address the issues raised by the risk to public

health due to activities of pests, and to the environment.

Oldbury found the big businesses to be largely self-policing. "They have got really good policies and procedures in place. Our problems were more with the small operators – the restaurants that don't necessarily appreciate the finer points of food hygiene." He found the scope of pest control contracts often inadequate to cover retail food outlets because the non-food rooms were not necessarily covered in the contract. A reduced specification in the contract could mean areas remaining untreated, he explains. "We encouraged proprietors to get comprehensive contracts with the contractors to allow them to do a reasonable job."

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**"Food businesses should specify that their pest control contractors have an appropriate professional standing."**

When raw produce arrives at the food premises, it should be inspected for evidence of infestation from the outset. Oldbury says the stock must remain accessible for inspection at all times. “One of the problems we find is that the produce can get stored against walls and there is no way around. Infestation from stored product pests can take hold without being easily detected.”

A food business should have pest prevention systems in place, which include having the building proofed to a very high standard to prevent pests gaining access in the first place. Oldbury gives an example: “You’d have doors with a gap of a maximum 5mm to prevent rats or mice getting in. And on critical areas you’d have fly screening up against the windows and electronic fly killers inside so that if anything does breach the screening it can be arrested on the fly killer.”

He continues: “If it is a manufacturing unit, a glue-board system should be used, rather than the high voltage grids which tend to explode a fly when it gets electrocuted.” He also suggests fly killers should be serviced in the spring so they are fully operational well before the summer months. And, he says: “It’s good practice to analyse the catch to identify the various fly species. You might then be able to find where they are coming from as part of the HACCP process.”

The proper disposal of food waste is also important; as pests quickly collect where waste food is left hanging around. Over a period of time Oldbury’s team managed to eliminate a significant number of pest problems in the Chinatown area of Manchester. He took a partnership approach wherever possible. Rather than prosecute, which he considers “an admission of failure”, the more practical approach was to “try and educate the proprietor on what was required and get them to put the investment in.” Acting as environmental health partners with local food businesses allowed the team to take a more advisory stance – to start with at least. “Where businesses didn’t take the advice or didn’t implement it



**“Despite attempts to contact major retailers, none were willing to discuss the issues on the record.”**

then we had the legislation to enforce”, he says. “But generally, it’s more to do with discussions with proprietors and getting them to understand why we want them to do what we’re asking them to do.”

Environmental issues are ever present: “Mice infestations are becoming quite problematic”, Oldbury says. “And in parts of the country, such as the South, rat infestations are becoming more difficult to control because of the resistance issue – resistance to rodenticides.” However, he stresses: “We don’t want anti-coagulant rodenticides in the environment for any length of time because of the risk to non-target species and the environment.”

He encourages responsible environmental management. For example, if food waste is stored correctly, and disposed of regularly by waste disposal contractors, pests can’t get at it. “What you’re doing is reducing the attraction in a particular area for a variety of pests such as mice, rats, insects including flies, or birds such as pigeons or gulls.”

It is in this area of appropriate food waste control

where environmental health professionals continue to see problems, Oldbury says. “We find it tends to be one of the most neglected areas – but at the proprietor’s peril.” He explains: “That is where most of the pests are attracted. Once they get there, they can then get into the restaurant or the supermarket quite easily if the building structure is inadequately proofed.”

He also encourages ‘block control’ – that is to say, the proper control of pests and compliance with food safety legislation at all retail food premises in a block of properties including the general environment surrounding the food businesses: “Otherwise you could get immigration of infestation” he says, adding: “We look at it holistically.” If needed, environmental health authorities have the necessary powers of entry and food safety legislation needed to enable such wide-reaching strategies.

Oldbury would like to see food businesses specify that their pest control contractors have an appropriate professional standing.





“We’re quite concerned that contractors should be members of continual professional development schemes like BASIS PROMPT (Professional Register of Managers and Pest Technicians). It keeps them up to date with the latest developments and issues in the pest management industry. So you don’t get servicing technicians who qualified 10-15 years ago practicing with outdated methods.”

And the challenges for the future? Oldbury thinks the current legislation gives sufficient power to public authorities when needed. He prefers though to consider environmental health teams as valuable partners with a robust strategy to protect the public, rather than simply as enforcers.

“It’s just a question of having the resources available to enforce it. And that is getting harder”, he says.



Jonathan Doyle is a freelance writer. He is editor of widely distributed *The Retailer*, published by British Retail Consortium (BRC). Jonathan started his career at the leading law publisher Lexis in the 1980s after graduating in Law and has been editor of *The Retailer* since 2008. Jonathan’s other current publishing work involves book and journal design and production.

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# GULL DETERRENCE

**The UK's gull population poses a major challenge for the pest control industry. Nick Warburton looks at the hazards associated with gulls and the control methods employed to control their numbers.**

Like all pests, gulls are great opportunists. Handed a ready food source on a plate, these persistent and insatiable scavengers will not be shy in taking advantage. Couple this behaviour with the rapid growth rate of urban populations and before long nesting sites that initially attracted a few pairs can become a magnet for large, thriving colonies.

As Peter Rock, a Bristol-based researcher and leading figure on urban gulls, points out, the problem has become particularly acute in towns and cities where urban gulls have been far more successful at breeding than their rural cousins.

Since the early 1960s, the main protagonists – Herring Gulls and Lesser Black-backed Gulls – have moved inland from their traditional coastal areas, founding what have now become flourishing colonies in an increasing number of the UK's large conurbations. Peter Rock reckons that the UK and Ireland's urban gull population is somewhere around the 100,000 pair mark.

While no one is quite sure what prompted this migration towards urban centres, it's quite feasible that the decline in the commercial fishing industry may have been a trigger, driving the gulls inland in search of more reliable food sources.





Even in the birds' traditional coastal environment, authorities like Brighton and Hove Council underline the removal of "easy pickings" as the best strategy for dealing with the gull problem.

It has published an advice note, which warns food businesses that they may face being handed a fixed penalty fine if they litter the pavements with commercial food waste. The local authority's environmental health team also works with businesses to ensure they have adequate waste storage facilities in place.

As additional measures, Brighton and Hove Council has created communal bins in the city centre to reduce the amount of domestic food waste left out in the street while the domestic refuse service has introduced gull proof bin sacks and wheelie bins.

The readily available supply of tasty snacks in coastal towns and cities is also prevalent inland. However, thanks to a unique set of circumstances, the urban environment is arguably more conducive to encouraging gull populations to thrive, not least because there are no natural predators to reduce the local population.

Another important factor is the 'urban heat island' effect, which means that towns and cities are warmer than the surrounding rural areas, arguably making the urban environment a more attractive location for gulls to breed.

What's more, the flat roofs on residential properties and businesses are ideal settings for nesting sites; the perfect substitute for the gulls' natural habitat on the coast – cliff tops.

Towns and cities are unique because they offer gulls a menu of mouthwatering food choices, not to forget nearby landfill sites.

Peter Stewart, a member of the Severn Estuary Gull Group, which specialises in trapping and ringing gulls at landfills in Gloucestershire, says the majority of frequenting gulls are migratory birds feeding en-route, although many remain over winter.

In his opinion, the problem lies not in the gulls feeding at these sites but the close proximity of the tips to nearby towns and cities, which act as a magnet to the urban colonies.

"At the present time, I feel it is best to leave the gulls to feed at the landfill sites rather than scavenge in the towns and cities where food discards can easily be found in the streets and parks," he says.

Growth in the urban gull population and the problems this causes has not gone unnoticed. The cacophony of noise generated by gulls in the early hours, especially during the breeding season, can be very unsettling for light sleepers.

Far more serious, however, is the public health hazard posed by the birds. While the gulls are nesting on roofs and incubating the eggs, they are quite docile. But once the young hatch and start to become active, the adults are naturally protective and can be extremely aggressive to any potential threats.

"If you are within a radius of say 50 feet or so, the gulls perceive you as a danger and harass you. That could be just noise, flying close or in extreme cases they will defecate on you," says Jeff Nelson,

operations director at EBS Pest Control. "It's the fear factor. That's the big thing really; the fear of these big birds diving close to your head."

For workmen that need to gain access to rooftops for essential maintenance, aggressive gulls can present a serious health risk.

"It's very intimidating if you've got a bird with a five-foot wingspan swooping over your head and you've got to climb a ladder that is 40 or 50 feet in the air," says Chris Turner, director of Rokill. "Or if you've got someone working on a roof and they're suddenly startled by a gull, there is a danger they might trip over."

Aside from the physical threat, gulls also leave a dent in the public purse. The cost of jet washing properties and public buildings smeared with gull guano can be very expensive, especially in hard-to-reach areas that require specialist access equipment.

When the droppings and/or nesting material gets washed into gutters, blocking pipes and flooding buildings, the cost in terms of structural and property damage, ruined product, business downtime and cleaning up can run into thousands of pounds.

"We recently did a rescue project on a furniture store," continues Chris Turner. "Gull carcasses, droppings and nesting materials had blocked up the internal gutter and basically backed up in to the store flooding the sales floor. They had to close the store for four days while it was cleaned up."

According to Grahame Turner, technical manager at Network Bird Solutions, there are two different aspects to managing gulls – single building management where proofing and deterrents are used and area population management, which necessitates a town or city-wide approach.

"A lot can be achieved in relieving problems on individual buildings, but area management is more of a challenge," he says.

When it comes to managing gulls, timing is crucial. As David Van Vynck, director at Van Vynck Environmental, explains, Herring Gulls start to build nests between late March and late

**"Gull carcasses, droppings and nesting materials had blocked up the internal gutter and basically backed up in the store flooding the sales floor."**

## Damage to insulation material caused by gulls.



Photograph courtesy of Rokill Pest Control.

## Roof installation of netting to exclude gulls.



Photograph courtesy of Rokill Pest Control.

April before starting to lay eggs in the first couple of weeks in May.

Taking early action to prevent gulls from nesting is vital as this will significantly reduce behaviour problems, he says. If preventative measures are not put in place by at least the second week of April, it's usually too late.

"Clients need to be realistic to what can actually be done then," he argues. "They need to be patient and accept that maybe they are looking to put something in place for the following season to stop the problem occurring in the future."

There's another aspect that pest controllers and their clients need to consider. Natural England issues a number of licences that allow pest controllers and others to legally carry out control methods that would otherwise be unlawful under the Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981.

The licences are not standardised across England, Ireland, Scotland and Wales so there are differences in legislation regarding gulls in the UK. Every year, Natural England consults and reviews the licences and in 2010 changes were introduced to the General Licence covering public health and safety. Due to a decline in overall populations, the Herring Gull and the Great Black-backed Gull were removed from the list of species that could be taken and killed under the English licence.

Paul Butt, a wildlife specialist with Natural England, says that it's still possible to remove the nests and eggs of Herring Gulls, but only for certain purposes. He advises anyone considering taking action under a General Licence to make sure they read and understand all sections within the relevant licence and that they meet all the requirements and conditions.

Apart from being illegal, except for certain species under strict conditions, culling is not an acceptable control measure and is very difficult to achieve.

"People have tried over the years to solve gull problems by culling them and that clearly hasn't worked," says Adrian Meyer, a consultant with Acheta. "The current emphasis is on proofing and exclusion."

Like many pest controllers, David Van Vynck's company adopts

**"Apart from being illegal, except for certain species under strict conditions, culling is not an acceptable control measure and is very difficult to achieve."**

an integrated approach to exclusion – in his case using a falconry service, supplemented by nest removal and egg replacement.

"Egg removal is successful providing you don't do it once," he says. "You need to do it where they have laid the eggs and then you need to maintain that. We would look to visit a site on a once a week basis." Jeff Nelson concurs and says that egg replacement proved to be quite effective as a control measure in an individual case he was asked to attend to.

"It didn't actually get rid of the gulls, but it made them more docile much longer as they incubated the egg for a greatly extended period," he says. "The maintenance men could work in relative safety on the adjacent building."

When it comes to proofing measures, the most common applications are spikes and netting. Chris Turner argues the most effective deterrent is netting, provided that it is installed properly.

"You do need to know what you are doing," he stresses. "You get inexperienced people that have a go at it and sometimes trap the birds. That is not the way forward. You need to install the netting in a specific way and at the right time of year to make sure it's effective."

Gulls are persistent scavengers that have established flourishing colonies in many towns and cities. While clearly there is no 'magic bullet' solution to this long-standing pest issue, problems can be reduced by clients and their pest controllers using an integrated approach to proofing and exclusion.



Nick Warburton is an award-winning journalist with over 10 years' experience across a diverse range of issues, including pest control, environmental and public health, travel and popular music. He is a

former deputy editor at the Environmental Health Practitioner, the official magazine of the Chartered Institute of Environmental Health, and is currently editor of Local Authority Waste and Recycling Magazine.





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# Beating bird brains

Pest controllers need to understand in detail the species they are dealing with, and birds are no exception. Over the years a wide range of control systems have been created to deal with bird infestations. The first principle of any system is to cause the birds no lasting harm, but only to prevent or discourage them from landing on a particular structure.

Most people will be familiar with passive systems such as barriers, spikes, nets and wire, which have been used to great effect. Similarly, visual systems such as mirrors, balloons and silhouettes or models of predatory creatures (eg. owls, cats) are available, but with limitations of application within certain environments. Passive systems can sometimes be overcome by birds, who learn quickly how to bypass them.

More recently active systems like shock strips, audible scarers such as bird distress calls, loud noises and high frequency sound have been used to create negative associations in birds wishing to land or roost on a building. These systems offer a stronger and more lasting deterrent, but can also become less effective over time.

One new development is a system using compressed air which operates using a passive infra-red (PIR) sensor – Birdscare.

The system is low energy, and the units are unobtrusive and can be colour coded to allow use on heritage buildings, for example.

When the bird attempts to land, it triggers the sensor causing the air system to make a low level hissing noise and bringing about a rapid whipping action with a small wand, scaring it away. The system's designers used their knowledge of bird behaviour to ensure the flight response is triggered. The bird quickly learns that when it tries to land in that location it will be frightened off, so they go elsewhere to roost and nest. The beauty of the system is that it is only triggered when the bird approaches, avoiding the situation where the bird becomes accustomed to the system. Unlike traditional timed bird scarers, the system then remains dormant until another bird approaches when once again it will operate.

While not ideal for every location, it is still highly adaptable and effective in a large number of locations, thus making this a highly effective system. It is encouraging to see innovation through a differently focused approach that keeps us one step ahead of our feathered friends.

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The UK pest management industry sees a significant increase in pest species over the coming years, and recognises the challenges this will bring.



# Public health pest control demand up

Almost two-thirds of respondents to a recent survey said they saw public health demands on their business growing in the next five years, with local authority pest controllers generally gloomy about their future role.

These findings come from the first ever 'state of the nation' survey among pest professionals, organised by BASF Pest Control Solutions and Pest magazine.

## CONCERNS AND ISSUES

	% agreeing
Anticoagulant rodenticides are essential for future rat and mouse control	94%
Anticoagulant rodenticides are essential for future public health	93%
Local authority cutbacks are likely to compromise public health	83%
Financial pressures on households are having a negative effect on pest control	81%
Financial pressures on businesses are having a negative effect on pest control	81%
Pest control is becoming more professional	81%
Insecticide resistance is a serious problem in some insect pests	50%
Rodenticide resistance is a serious problem in rats and mice	45%

The results suggest that both government austerity measures and financial pressures on households are set to have serious impacts on pest control.

It is also clear that pest professionals believe that anticoagulant rodenticides are absolutely essential to public health, highlighting the

need for industry lobbying to avoid their loss.

Despite all the talk about the rising threat from bedbugs, rodent control remains the mainstay of pest control work, with almost 50% of work coming from this source, and a third from insects.

Local authorities spend more than three quarters of their time dealing with rats, mice and wasps in domestic settings, and do virtually no bird work. For self-employed pest controllers the same three pests are important, but mammals such as rabbits, foxes, and moles make up over 15% of their annual pest control work. Private companies are much more likely to do bird management work, on average a tenth of their business.

With rodents dominating current activity, what changes do pest controllers anticipate in the types of pests they will be called upon to deal with in future? Perhaps unsurprisingly, bed bugs are ranked as the pest that is most likely to increase over time. Overall 70% of pest controllers say it is a type of work that they expect to see rise in importance, particularly with the media hype surrounding this pest. However, very few pest controllers anticipate that rodent pests will decline in importance.

Other potential growth areas identified in the survey are mammal control and bird management with over 40% predicting a rise.

Perhaps the optimism seen in the private companies and among the self-

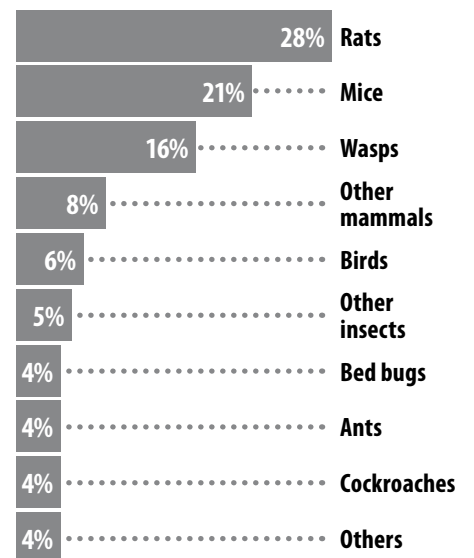
employed is because they see opportunities to take on contracts for local authorities which decide to disband their in-house pest control units. Whoever the control is carried out by, it is clear the need for public health pest control will only become greater with emerging diseases, different pest species and changes to their distribution arising from lifestyle choices.

## For further information

<http://goo.gl/ECNCR>  
[www.pestcontrol.basf.co.uk](http://www.pestcontrol.basf.co.uk)

## ACTIVITIES BY PEST TYPE

as a percentage of all replies



# GETTING THE BEST FROM YOUR PEST CONTROLLER

**The provision of pest control services to a professional standard can be an area which is overlooked. Yet, the economic consequences of inadequate pest control could be catastrophic.**

## **Why is pest control important?**

In short, pests meant dirt, damage, disease... and cost money.

### **Contamination**

Insects, rodents and birds contaminate food, equipment and working surfaces and many carry bacteria, viruses, spores or parasites. Some produce allergic reactions in susceptible individuals.

### **Damage**

Rats and mice have caused serious fires by gnawing the insulation from electrical cables, floods by puncturing pipes, and even death by chewing holes in gas pipes. They can also ruin packaging, polystyrene insulation and finished goods in-store.

Insect infestation may cause the rejection of whole consignments of goods, the halting of production and the recall of products. Contracts may be terminated if suppliers fail to meet hygiene standards.

### **Loss of Business**

Prosecutions and fines for pest-infested premises make headlines that cause customers to shop or dine elsewhere.

Loss of business can sometimes lead to closure. Lost goodwill and damaged confidence are inevitable, caused by media reports such as 'the hospital with death for lunch' or 'restaurant fined £15,000.'

**Kevin Higgins, BPCA membership manager, explains the risks of inadequate control to offer guidance when searching for a pest control contractor, and how to draw up a pest control contract to help you select an appropriate operator.**



## **Legislation**

If you are a property owner the Prevention of Damage by Pests Act 1949 insists you keep your premises free from rodents or report the infestation to your local authority if rodents are present in substantial numbers. If you are in a food business, the Act requires you to report any rodent infestations.

The Food Safety Act 1990 and the Food Hygiene (General) Regulations 1995 insists food premises are kept as pest free – insects and birds as well as rodents – as is practicable and the Act extends to cover any vehicle used to transport food.

Failure to keep your premises pest free can result in their closure and penalties of up to £20,000 fine for each offence, or up to six months in prison for serious breaches.

## **Appoint a professional pest control contractor**

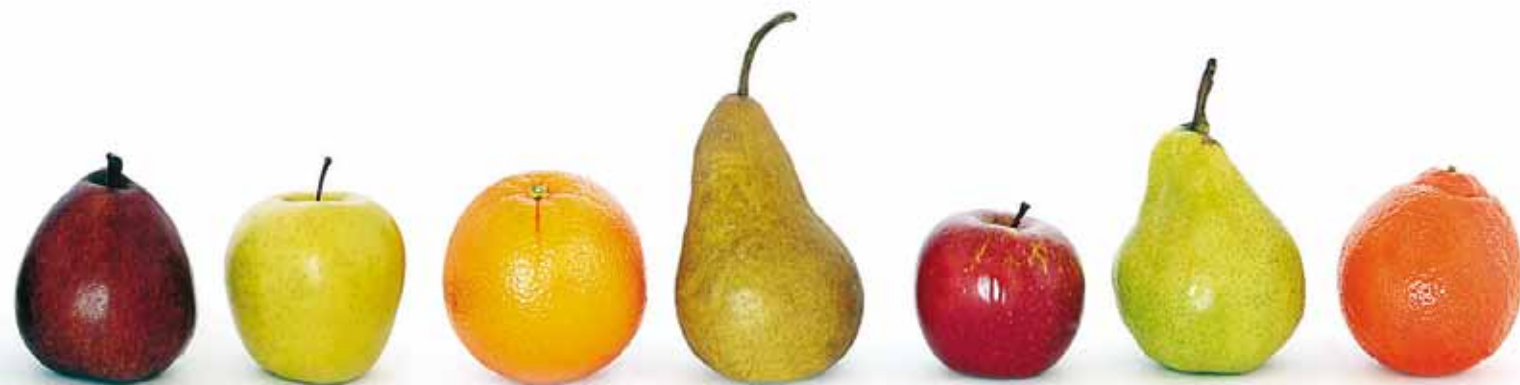
Professional pest control provides protection from the risks of pest-borne contamination and damage by pests. A comprehensive pest control contract covers preventative measures, management reporting procedures, accountability, and a documented system of measures which provide appropriate evidence for the defence of 'due diligence' against prosecution and its consequences.

Professional pest controllers also provide the necessary documentation and risk assessment for employers to meet the Control of Substances Hazardous to Health Regulations 1999 (COSHH).

A professional pest control contract ensures that you have no infestation problems – and that you stay that way.



“A professional pest control contract ensures that you have no infestation problems – and that you stay that way.”



### How to choose a pest control contractor

When selecting a pest control contractor, consider the following:

- The ability of the contractor to carry out a full survey of the premises and present a clear report, with action points, recommendations and a firm quotation of costs.
- Evidence of adequate technical resources and of correctly trained and qualified service staff, supervisors and management. If individual technicians belong to the PROMPT (Professional Register of Managers and Pest Technicians) scheme, this provides the necessary evidence. The register is a list of pest control managers and technicians with a recognised industry qualification, who agree to abide by a written Code of Professional Ethics, and can prove that their technical knowledge is up to date. To stay on the register, members must obtain a prescribed number of Continuing Professional Development (CPD) points.
- Proof of adequate public liability, product liability and employers' liability insurance cover.
- The capacity to provide proofing and other preventative measures such as advice on housekeeping, storage, waste disposal, cleaning and the detection and monitoring of pest populations.
- Reporting procedures giving clear accountability on both sides.
- Clear contract terms to specify the pests to be covered, frequency of visits, responsibility for preventative measures, arrangements for extra treatments or emergency call-outs.



### Choose a member of the BPCA

When purchasing services, unlike goods, buyers cannot see what they are getting before making up their mind. The decision to take on a service contractor is, therefore, something of an act of faith, and buyers cannot afford to make a mistake.

By choosing a BPCA member you are ensuring the contractor is able to provide a thoroughly professional and consistent service – see directory of members from page 37.

All reputable pest control contractors should:

- be able to give appropriate assurances that they comply fully with all aspects of the Control of Pesticides Regulations 1986 and other relevant legislation such as the Control of Substances Hazardous to Health Regulations 1999
- be a member of a trade association with staff who hold the BPCA/RSPH Award in Pest Management and are recognised on a CPD scheme
- be able to provide evidence of financial stability, length of experience in pest control, and be prepared to supply a list of at least six clients from whom references may be sought
- be able to detail the extent of their own technical resources or access to independent research and development, identification services and quality assessment.



/continued over...

# Pest control contract specifications

**Effective pest control requires a partnership between the client and their needs, and the client's understanding of what is technically possible and economically viable.**

This understanding can be reached through a contract specification which clearly defines the service to be provided whilst avoiding unreasonable or unrealistic demands of the contractor.

This article seeks to assist clients draft contract specifications to suit their premises. It is not possible to draw up a single contract specification or even a model which can simply be adopted by all. What can be given is an outline of the features which should be covered by all contract specifications.

Time should be taken drawing up the specification, if in doubt seek advice. Potential contractors will assist, as will the BPCA and independent consultants to the industry. If your premises are particularly large or complex, consider employing the services of a specialist to conduct a pre-tender survey and help you prepare your specification.



The contract specification should cover the following points:

## **Company policy towards infestation and level of control**

The contractor should understand what is required of them. This may not be as obvious as it seems and the client should not, therefore, expect such a service to come cheaply. The contract specification should tell the contractor what level of control is required and where.

## **Range of pests covered**

Most servicing agreements cover a narrow range of pests which cause public health problems in commercial premises. Ensure a list is included, and consider restricting this list to pests you may currently have or experienced recently. If you include others, contractors will have to allow for them in their costing, although adequate preventative measures should not be overlooked.

## **Access**

Pest control technicians require access to all areas which may need inspection or treatment. Some treatments may require that other personnel be excluded during the treatment. Limitations to access should be made clear in the specification.

## **Pest control methods**

Legislation restricts what pesticides can be used, where and how. Only trained personnel may use pesticides or decide how they are used. Selection of the appropriate pesticide is the contractor's

responsibility. Contracts should not specify what pesticides should be used or request supplies of pesticide for the client's staff to apply.

Clients may operate policies which will restrict control methods adopted by the contractor. For example hygiene requirements may preclude the use of any pesticides in certain areas. Such policies should be made clear in the contract specification and alternatives discussed with potential contractors at the pre-tendering stage.

## **Type and frequency of visits**

Inspection and service will take place during visits to the premises by the contractor. Visits will be of three types and conditions should be developed covering each, including frequency and type of visits covered by the price:

### **Routine inspections**

A pre-arranged number of regular inspections. In restaurants and hotels the frequency will often be eight per year at six weekly intervals. Fewer visits will be insufficient to prevent infestations from developing. Some premises will require more frequent inspection – 13 or 26 visits per year. Inspections should be regular in an eight visit contract, seven visits in the last three months will not be acceptable.

### **Emergency call outs**

An arrangement should exist whereby the contractor can be called out to deal with a specific problem, and clearly defined. In particular how soon after the call-out the contractor is required on site, what constitutes an 'emergency' and who is authorised to make the call.

### **Follow up visits**

Additional visits may be required to reinforce control measures.



“In restaurants and hotels the routine inspection frequency will often be eight per year at six weekly intervals.”

**Liaison**

To co-ordinate communications between the client and the contractor it is usual for an ‘authorised officer’ to be appointed, who should:

- have a working knowledge of pest control
- overview all premises covered by the contract specification
- have authority to facilitate any actions proposed by the contractor to ensure that remedial treatments are effective
- be recognised by all staff employed by the client as the central point for reporting pest problems
- have time to accompany the contractor during some inspections to foster an understanding of the actions taken by the contractor.

**Reporting**

The contractor should institute a system of written reports on all visits. These should be dated and describe the extent of treatments undertaken. The identity of all pesticides applied should be recorded, together with any warnings/precautions to be undertaken by client’s staff in relation to the pesticides applied/work carried out.

An important aspect of pest control is denial of access to pests

and maintenance of an environment which discourages the development of infestation. Reports should detail advice regarding proofing against access, denial of harbourage and removal of food sources, to facilitate control measures and to discourage infestation.

Reports should be lodged with the authorised officer and should form the basis of liaison between client and contractor.

**Contract period**

This should be for a period of at least one year. In large and more complex premises, involving a major riddance programme or where significant allocation of resources by the contractor is required, the minimum period should be longer.

**Cancellation**

Terms for cancellation and periods of notice should be defined.

**Payment terms**

These should normally be three months, six months or twelve months in advance and billed at regular intervals.

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# THE TENDERING PROCESS



Sufficient time should be allowed to make the most of the contract specification. Getting it right at this stage saves headaches later according to BPCA membership manager Kevin Higgins.



“...if the lowest tender is significantly cheaper than the rest then think carefully.”

### Selection of servicing companies

Draw up a list of pest control servicing companies. As a minimum, ensure candidates:

- have a good track record - seek references
- employ adequately trained and competent technicians
- carry sufficient insurance cover
- business is structured to provide a professional service and a recording system that accounts for all work carried out.

Make sure your tenderers have the resources to meet the requirements of your contract. Many contracts can be handled by a sole trader or partnership, whilst others may require the commitment of greater resources.

### Invitation and receipt of tenders

When inviting companies to tender be prepared to assist them with a realistic, but competitive, quotation.

- Give companies adequate time to survey the site. The site's complexity, geography and history will need to be understood for a quotation to be calculated.
- During the site survey provide access and assistance as required.
- If the site is very large, complex or critical, consider commissioning a pre-tender survey, by an independent organisation. Make this available to tenderers to assist them with their quotation.

The above procedure should make the tender selection process straight forward. The objective is to obtain the best possible price for companies quoting against the same criteria and you should then be able to select the lowest price from a short list. However, if the lowest tender is significantly cheaper than the rest then think carefully.

### Awarding the contract

Having awarded the contract, notify all involved as quickly as possible. You are not obliged to give unsuccessful tenders any information other than they were unsuccessful. Some information can however be useful particularly if you want them to tender in the future.

### BPCA members

BPCA requires that its members meet a range of criteria – see page 37 and [www.bpca.org.uk](http://www.bpca.org.uk) – and assessment procedures are in place to ensure that these standards are maintained.

Operation of these procedures offers potential customers an indication that BPCA members are able to offer a professional service and get the job right first time. It is our recommendation, that you draw up your tender list from the BPCA Directory of Members – from page 37.

[www.bpca.org.uk](http://www.bpca.org.uk)



Kevin Higgins has been involved in the pest control industry his entire life, starting out as an Army Health Inspector. He ran his own servicing company for a number of years and is currently BPCA's membership manager, a role he has carried out for five years, which keeps him in touch with the 'real-life', daily issues specifiers and pest control businesses face. [kevin@bpca.org.uk](mailto:kevin@bpca.org.uk)

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# Is your insurance up to scratch?

**Business owners and managers are well aware of the need to consider the adequacy of contractor's insurance arrangements and this will be no different for pest control companies working at your premises.**

In addition to ensuring that your assets and income streams are adequately protected, you will also want comfort that contractors have the appropriate insurances in place to protect their liability and to safeguard the safety and integrity of your operation.

With the raft of responsibility forced upon you through common law and key legislation such as the Health and Safety at Work Act and the Occupiers Liability Act, ensuring the adequacy of contractor's insurance arrangements and the implementation of a competent health and safety policy will be a major consideration when making new appointments of service providers.

With this in mind, BPCA is working with leading insurance and

risk management advisors in order to ensure that all BPCA members have access to insurance products and services that meet the needs and requirements of both the public and private sectors, and in the next issue of **alexo** we will be investigating and commenting further on the insurance issues and considerations surrounding the appointment of a contractor by a property owner or manager.

Also, are you aware that a standard UK property insurance policy, specifically excludes damage caused by "marring, scratching, vermin or insects"?

Whilst we understand that some specialist property policies do include this cover, we would consider that this is something of which you should at least be aware. We are currently looking at how BPCA members can help bridge this gap and Issue Two of **alexo** will give you the full story.

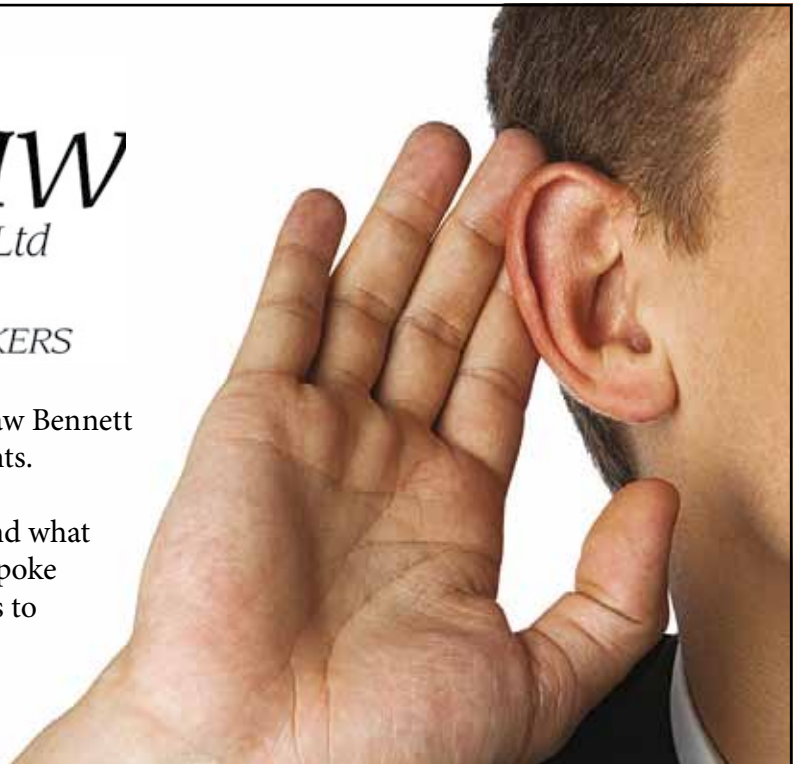
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## Great leaping roaches!

Scientists in South Africa have discovered a new species set to send shudders around the world – jumping cockroaches. The previously unknown insect was found leaping around in undergrowth inside the Table Mountain National Park near Cape Town. The jumping cockroach – nicknamed the ‘leaproach’ – was discovered by chance by South African biologists Mike Picker and Jonathan Colville as they searched for flies during a research project.

Professor Picker, who works at the University of Cape Town said: “We were sweep netting and spotted something that at first looked like a grasshopper.

“But when we got it back to the laboratory it became clear it was a cockroach, closely related to the common roach but with sophisticated hind legs and the ability to jump many times its own height.”

The half-inch creature has the same appearance as the common cockroach, but

is active during the day. The scientists have officially named the leaproach ‘*Saltoblattella montistabularis*’ – the first part being Latin for ‘jumping cockroach’ and the second a reference to the Table Mountain park.

The insect has been added to a list of more than 4,000 known cockroach species – and so far, it is the only one that can jump. Don’t be concerned – it’s unlikely to be appearing in the UK in the near future. And if it does, BPCA members will be ready...

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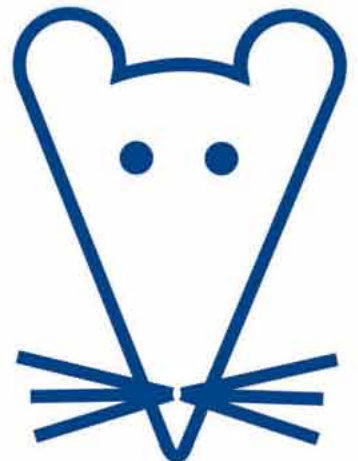
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