



## What is alexo?

**alexo** is BPCA's monthly magazine designed to keep your business informed about public health pest control.

**alexo** is packed with professional advice from leading experts in the pest control industry, and is the only magazine you need to tackle your organisation's pest problems.

## Why choose a BPCA member?

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

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



## Farming & Food Special

# contents

### Pest control in agriculture

The most common pest problems faced by the farming community.



### Food pest control - setting the standards

Are food industry standards fit for purpose?



### Grain Fumigations

Advice on maintaining your stock levels.

# Pest control in agriculture

Often when we consider pest species on farms, we automatically think of rodents due to their ability to transfer diseases from pest to man and pest to animal. However, some pest species do not automatically cause a potential risk to health, but in the right circumstances they can still be incredibly destructive to your land, crop, livestock or property. BPCA Technical Manager Richard Moseley explains why farmers should consider their pest control strategy this autumn.

After spending a considerable amount of time and money ensuring the crop in the field has been cared for in such a way as to maximise quality and yield, no doubt farmers will want to make sure that whilst in storage, the crop remains in tip top condition ready for sale. With this in mind, it's important to take a step back and consider how you can prevent and control those core pests that are potentially causing the most damage to your business.

## Rodents

Rats and mice can inflict a great amount of structural damage as well as being a health hazard. They have been known to gnaw the insulation from electrical cables, create flooding by puncturing pipes, and even chew holes in gas pipes.

Rodents require three things – food, water and harbourage. By using the following good housekeeping techniques it should be possible to keep your premises rodent free:

- Minimise the attractiveness of food storage/preparation areas by ensuring that all areas are kept clean and that any gaps into buildings or storage areas are filled.
- Outdoors, don't forget waste disposal areas close to your farm buildings. Rubbish should be kept in metal bins with close-fitting lids to prevent access by rodents and flies. Remove rubbish and piles of discarded vegetation.
- Rats are neophobic - they do not like new items and changes to their environment. Take rats out of their 'comfort zone' by removing piles of scrap wood, gathered leaves, boards, pipes and abandoned equipment where rodents can hide. Cut back weeds and clutter around buildings where possible.
- To keep rodents from entering a building, fix and replace cracked or broken doors and windows and keep drains and drain covers in a good state of repair.

Proofing involves using physical barriers at specific points where pests are most likely to gain access to a building, for example from sewers via a drain. Rats and mice can squeeze through very small gaps within a building; spaces between the floors and ceilings, behind skirting boards, ducts and conduits, and timber and plastic casings to pipes and cables all provide perfect areas for harbourage.

There are several ways to spot if rats or mice are present. Mice produce between 40-100 droppings daily, 3-7mm long.

/continued over...



“While pest prevention can be common sense, effective pest control requires in depth knowledge of the biology and behaviour of the pest in question, knowledge of the relevant legislation and also experience of which professional product will be most effective.”



Rats average 40-50 droppings a day, each roughly 13-19mm. In a large infestation, a strong odour may be detected from the rodent's urine, and shredded paper or burrows outdoors may indicate nests. If you do spot signs of an infestation, particularly within a roof space, it is imperative that your suspicions are confirmed by a professional; to the untrained eye, the droppings of bats can look very similar to mice droppings.

While pest prevention can be common sense, effective pest control requires in depth knowledge of the biology and behaviour of the pest in question, knowledge of the relevant legislation and also experience of which professional product will be most effective. It may be tempting to save money and attempt to control an infestation yourself but if you cannot satisfy the above criteria you could make a small problem a major one.

### Pest Mammals

Although pest mammals such as moles and rabbits may not an immediate cause a public health risk, they can still cause devastating damage in an agricultural environment. A good example of a pest that fits this scenario is the Mole. The soil from molehills in grass silage for example can result in spoilt and unpalatable silage, and can possibly be a source of Listeriosis in sheep. In many areas silage is already in short supply, so any pest that can contribute to it spoiling must be controlled.

Moles will also damage crop meant for consumption by humans as well as by animals. Where moles burrow under arable crops they can damage seedling and plants, resulting in wilting and death. Again, as crop yields can be reduced due to poor weather conditions, it is essential that as much as your crop as possible is not lost to pest activity.

Rabbits too can cause issues for farmers. Rabbits will eat a wide range of herbage, but will select more nutritious growth. This results in them automatically being attracted to agricultural crops as they tend to be more nutritious and will be plentiful when planted. This can result in serious economic loss for farmers and growers, and yield losses can be substantial where rabbit activity goes unchecked.

Rabbits can also cause extreme damage with their burrow systems. Rabbit digging will undermine embankments and even structures, causing collapse. New and even established plants and trees can be affected as rabbits tend to damage the leading shoots and strip bark. Even if rabbits are not causing issues on your land and live on your property, you still have a legal obligation under the PestAct 1954 to control them or prevent them accessing your neighbours land if they start to cause issues on their property.

### Summary

It is widely accepted by farming organisations that poor weather conditions will have a detrimental effect on farming yields and economic returns. Poor weather also forces pests like rats and mice to seek shelter and new food sources, often within your farm buildings. In such situations, it is essential that we do not ignore the pest species that can compound this situation even further by damaging the remaining crop and silage that farmers have access to. If you need help or support to protect your yields, ensure that you use a professional to make sure that pest control measures are suitable, cost effective, and ultimately, legal.

**Do you need help with preparing the right contract specification to suit your business needs? BPCA can help you with all your pest control needs, from designing specifications, to finding a professional pest controller. Find out more at [www.bpca.org.uk/advice](http://www.bpca.org.uk/advice)**

**REMEMBER!**  
Find a local professional pest controller  
[bpca.org.uk](http://bpca.org.uk)

# FOOD PEST CONTROL SETTING THE STANDARD



The food and drink industry is the UK's largest manufacturing sector. With an annual turnover of £70bn, food represents some 20% of all consumer spending. Effective pest control programmes should be standard practice - whether they actually are is a matter of interpretation.



Effective pest management programmes in food retailing or processing premises should not only prevent the introduction of pests, but also reduce the conditions that may encourage pest presence or facilitate their survival once they establish a presence. Setting the standards for these goals is one thing – working to those standards in practice can be quite another.

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.

But the legislation is only part of it. Pest control contractors are not required to be used or, if they are employed, are not regulated as an industry. Compliance with the legislation is something food businesses work out within the priorities and resources they have.

Large retailers in the food sector also use commercially published and certified standards that in effect sit as a layer on top of the legislation. These larger retailers require firms supplying them to be audited for compliance under the commercial regimes. One such standard is the British Retail Consortium's Global Standard on Food Safety, first published in 1998 and now in its sixth issue. Designed for companies supplying retailer branded food products, the standard helps promote consistency across the supply chain. Issue 6 contains pest control provision. According to BRC, the revision "emphasises good manufacturing practice including foreign body control, hygiene, housekeeping and allergens."

The standards prescribe a regime of pest control but don't require any particular qualification for engaged or retained pest controllers.

While insurance cover for pest controllers doesn't typically specify working to a compliance with the BRC's standard (or any other for that matter), there is perhaps a basis for engagement. After all, insurers have a very real interest in the consequences of poor practice. Specialist and chartered insurance brokers Bradshaw Bennett Ltd says "While we check pest controllers are carrying out the appropriate risk assessments, procedures and method statements before they carry out work, our specialist insurance scheme is designed to cover pest controllers for the full range of their activities."

David Oldbury lectures on pest control at Salford University, having formerly worked for Manchester City Council's environmental health service. He is also Secretary of the National Pest Advisory Panel (NPAP), set up by the Chartered Institute of Environmental Health.

"The layout, design and operation of food premises," Oldbury says, "should permit good food hygiene practices including protection against contamination and, in particular, adequate pest control." He stresses the importance of including the external waste areas in a full pest control programme. Reducing food availability here and hence pest prevalence near food premises necessarily reduces the risk of pests inside the premises.

Pest control as a subject remains something of a taboo among the UK's large food groups however. Those retailers approached for this article declined to contribute, as did the BRC itself. Though, Oldbury says "The large food companies have got it all neatly sewn up. Their reputations are at stake in that respect." However, he says, the smaller food outlets and facilities can be a very different story.

"What the eye doesn't see the heart doesn't grieve", says Oldbury, adding: "They tend to skimp on that".

It's expensive keeping up a full pest control programme and he acknowledges the current economic pressures no doubt contribute to the levels of service cover that some food businesses will invest in. Further, as he points out, cutbacks in public sector resourcing must eventually have an impact on the effective enforceability of the legislation. "We don't necessarily have the staff available to police it to the extent we did in the past." Arguably, while the commercial standards may compensate for reductions in public enforcement (albeit only in the businesses that adopt or are subject to them) without judicial scrutiny of their auditors' interpretation of their provisions, consistency of application could become an issue for the pest control profession.

There is some anecdotal evidence that this is indeed an issue. Tony Baker runs the pest control business Alphakill. Some of Baker's food processing and supply clients are tied to the BRC (and other) standards by their own retailing clients. Baker himself uses the standards whenever he can with all his work, even where clients are not themselves subject to compliance. "I just work the standard all the way from the large clients to the small [independents]", he says. "It makes eminent sense and it's good business as well." The issue for Baker is not the standards themselves, which he says are not onerous, but their inspection. "When [clients] have audits, there are wildly different interpretations of those standards". He complains that too often standards inspectors "don't have the faintest idea of the differences between a good pest controller and a bad pest controller".

David Lodge, Service Director at Beaver Pest Control agrees the point. He concurs, a variation in interpretation can be a real issue in practice. "On occasions we do have a problem meeting the varying standards from different auditors for our larger clients". He gives an example: "We provided pest control to a manufacturer of plastic cutlery and plates [supplying] major shopping chains. They were receiving audits. Our feedback from the audits was continually confusing and contradictory – there seemed to be no set standards." Beaver Pest Control offered to discuss the issues with the various auditors but their initiative was continually declined. Eventually, Lodge says, "it became apparent that although the client and Beaver were trying to comply with all of their recommendations, [the auditors] were angling for a national company to carry out the pest control. The client supported us strongly but eventually agreed to employ a national supplier."

Tony Baker says the standards are "very specific" on pest control. The BPCA consulted with the BRC on the current Food Safety Standard (Issue 6) and other standards on technical aspects of pest control requirements, and recently launched specific training on Pest Awareness for BRC members (see back page). He welcomes this involvement wholeheartedly and thinks it can only be for the good. "In most food premises, pest control is the lowest possible priority", he claims. "Pest control for any business is a grudge purchase." David Oldbury is in agreement here, saying

/continued over...

much of the time a business will engage pest control on the basis of the lowest quote “and that might not necessarily be the best coverage for the contract.”

David Lodge says companies are much more likely to pay more if they have to comply with external auditing. “The level of service will be driven by the client’s needs, their buyers’ demands, their own business ethos and their available budget.” He reiterates though that the auditors often seem to be “rather uncoordinated in their varying demands”. He thinks they “need to understand that the national companies are not always better than local SMEs.” Auditors also should be open to liaising with the incumbent service provider to establish a forward looking and acceptable provision of pest control standards. Lodge suggests. “A closer working relationship with the BPCA is I believe the way forward”.

Guidelines drawn up by NPAP (Pest Control in the Food Industry 2009) are aimed at the food manufacturing sector. 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 would like to see food businesses specify that their pest control contractors have an appropriate professional standing. “We’re quite concerned that not all contractors are members of Continuing Professional Development schemes like BASIS PROMPT (Professional Register of Pest Technicians and Managers). It keeps them up to date with the latest developments and issues in the pest management industry.”



“The BRC believes that its latest standard has gone some way to allowing pest controllers more freedom to control pests.”

BPCA Technical Manager Richard Moseley agrees, he says “The Association has created its own standard to ensure everyone has access to a pest control specification that will yield proper, professional pest control within any premises”. Tony Baker agrees that the pest control industry should have a standard itself. If you don’t have your own, “you can’t dictate to other people what their standard should be”, he says. And the fact the Confederation of European Pest Management Association (CEPA) are currently putting together a CEN Standard for pest management services, to be launched in 2014. Baker is very clear to tell his customers what he wants

from them: “They are under no illusions: if they fail to follow a recommendation I have given to them, and I get called back out, they

have to pay for the visit.” It works, he says: “If they think they’ve got to pay for additional visits because they’re not doing their job right, I guarantee you they get the work done.”

It all comes down to following the standards, Baker says. “Standards in all things are useful. They are a template for the way I work. There is nothing wrong with standards and standardisation. “The approach to pest control depends on how seriously the person in charge of that [client] company takes their business.”

- [www.alphakill.co.uk](http://www.alphakill.co.uk)
- [www.pestcontrolservices.co.uk](http://www.pestcontrolservices.co.uk)
- [www.bradshaw-bennet.co.uk](http://www.bradshaw-bennet.co.uk)
- [www.basis-reg.com/pestcontrol](http://www.basis-reg.com/pestcontrol)
- [www.cepa-europe.org](http://www.cepa-europe.org)



**Further information**

Should you require further information, advice or support please contact BPCA on 01332 294288 or visit our website at [www.bpca.org.uk](http://www.bpca.org.uk)



Visit [www.bpca.org.uk](http://www.bpca.org.uk)  
or call 01332 294 288

# BPCA online

Searching for a professional pest controller? Our database of hundreds of UK pest control companies with thousands of branches across the UK allows you to search by:

- Domestic or commercial contract
- Pest type – bed bugs, wasps, rats, mice, birds, mammals, and many more
- Distance from your premises
- Area covered

# Grain Fumigations



BPCA Technical Manager, Richard Moseley explains how to ensure your stock levels are maintained.

We are all aware of the damage that rats can do to stored crops. For every kilo of product consumed by rodents, 10 kilo of produce destined for human or animal consumption is contaminated with their urine and droppings, rendering it useless. But what can be the results of insect infestation on an already reduced harvest?

Infestations of grain pests such as the Saw Tooth Grain Beetle and Grain Weevil can be devastating. Unchecked infestations will decimate stored grain and render it useless. As always, in such situations, prevention is better than cure. By cooling the grain to temperatures of 15C you can slow down and eventually stop insect breeding and development. Complement the cooling of grain with regular inspections to product and storage areas by a suitably qualified person (RSPH/BPCA Level 2 Award in Pest Management), and you will ensure that infestation will be spotted early and that insect activity can be dealt with before any major damage occurs.

If you do find evidence of insects, rapid action is required and fumigation with a metallic phosphide will usually be the most suitable course of action. However, remember that the fumigants currently available for fumigating grain are highly toxic and can kill. There is no antidote to phosphine, the gas that is released by metallic phosphides and in the hand of an unskilled operator, these products can be deadly. It is essential that you put the process of fumigation in the hands of a skilled contractor who understands the

pest, the product and the treatment site. This will ensure that you, your staff and your animals remain safe during the fumigation process.

When you require the services of a Fumigator to inspect or treat grain, always use a Fumigator who holds the British Pest Control Association (BPCA) Certificate of Proficiency for Fumigation Operators, and whom is preferably a current full servicing member of BPCA. Our members meet strict membership criteria and are regularly assessed, and our training is recognised by the Health and Safety Executive Chemical Regulations Directorate.

When you have fumigation carried out on site by a trained operator, it is essential that you follow the advice and instruction of the company to ensure that the fumigation is ultimately successful without putting people on site at risk. You should never remove sheets or enter fumigation areas before they have been declared safe

## Further information

Should you require further information on BPCA Fumigators in your areas, or to ensure that your current Fumigator is suitably qualified to carry out the work they are doing, please contact the British Pest Control Association on 01332 294288 / or visit [www.bpca.org.uk](http://www.bpca.org.uk)

# BPCA online

If you are searching for a professional pest controller, then look no further!

Searching for a professional pest controller?

Our database of hundreds of UK pest control companies with thousands of branches across the UK allows you to search by:

- Domestic or commercial contract
- Pest type – bed bugs, wasps, rats, mice, birds, mammals, and many more
- Distance from your premises
- Area covered

Visit [www.bpca.org.uk](http://www.bpca.org.uk)  
or call 01332 294 288



## Worried about what you've read in this issue of **alexo**?



- Have you bought pest control solely on price?
- What criteria did you use to select your servicing company?
- Are you convinced it will protect your business?

We can help with...

- Producing pest control specifications, contracts and tenders
- Pest awareness training
- Associate membership of BPCA
- Consultancy services
- Pest identification
- Finding you a professional contractor
- General pest advice

Find out more at  
[www.bpca.org.uk/advice](http://www.bpca.org.uk/advice)

