

Facilities Special



What is alexo?

alexo is BPCA's digital 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.



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Rats: know your enemy



Talk of plagues of rats taking over our towns and cities is the stuff of tabloid headlines and, of course, an exaggeration. But as the saying goes 'there's no smoke without fire'. While rats still remain the biggest problem pest in the UK, it's important you know this enemy.

Whichever way you look at it, there are a lot of rats out there, But should this be of concern? For facilities, buildings and estate managers the answer is a resounding 'yes' for a number of reasons.

First and foremost rats carry many nasty diseases which they can spread to humans, normally through their urine. These include; Leptospirosis (Weil's disease), Salmonella; Listeria, Toxoplasma gondii and Hantavirus. As well as being a health hazard, rats can inflict a great amount of structural damage. They have caused serious fires by gnawing away the insulation around electrical cables, floods by puncturing pipes and even death by chewing through gas pipes. Sources in the insurance sector have estimated that rodent damage to wiring causes 25% of all electrical fires in buildings. Rats can also ruin an organisation's reputation.

If clients and customers spot evidence of rodent infestation in the premises you manage, they are unlikely to want to do business with you. Finally, all property owners have a legal obligation under the Prevention of Damage by Pests Act 1949 to keep premises rodent-free, or, if rodents pose a threat to health or property, to report infestations to the local authority.

Know your enemy

Like most living creatures, rats require three things to survive and thrive – food, water and shelter. In urban environments food is rarely a problem as rats are true omnivores and will eat almost anything. Where there is a suitable concentrated food supply they tend not to wander extensively, often staying within 20m of their nest, although they will forage further afield when food is scarcer.

Norway rats are usually active at night. If conditions are suitable they can breed throughout the year. In the mild conditions in cities, for example one female can produce 10 young, 10 times a year. To put that in perspective one rat is born every second in London or 3,600 new rats every hour.

Rats are neophobic, in other words they are very wary of new things and that can include bait boxes and the rodenticide baits they contain, making it essential to understand the rats' biology and behaviour in order to gain control.

Spotting the problem

There are several tell-tale signs of a rodent infestation. First and

foremost look out for droppings – rats average 40-50 droppings a day, each roughly 13-19mm in length. In a large infestation a strong odour may be detected from the rodent's urine. Nesting materials such as shredded insulation, cardboard or paper is another indication as are signs of gnawing. You might also see evidence of rat runs – smear marks along skirting boards and around doors, footprints in the dust or corridors of flattened vegetation in the undergrowth outside buildings.

Preventing infestations - good housekeeping

- Tidy up any storage and food areas
- Minimise the attractiveness of food preparation areas by ensuring all food spillages are cleaned and that any gaps between cupboards or behind working surfaces into which particles of food may fall are cleaned regularly
- Store food products in rodent-proof containers and inspect them regularly
- Manage all waste disposal areas carefully. Rubbish should be kept in metal bins with close-fitting lids to prevent access by rodents
- Keep vegetation around buildings short and tidy to expose rat runs and burrows, thus making rats more vulnerable to predators
- Cut back on clutter around buildings such as piles of scrap wood, gathered leaves, boards, pipes and abandoned equipment where rodents can hide
- Rats can squeeze through very small spaces - perfect harbourage areas include spaces between the floors and ceilings, behind skirting boards, ducts and conduits as well as timber and plastic casings to pipes and cables. 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.

If the worst was to happen - hire a professional!

Appointing a professional pest controller is often the best way of preventing an infestation in the first place. Good contractors will regularly inspect premises for you and recommend improvements in housekeeping and proofing measures. Should the worst happen they will quickly be able to implement an effective control programme.

Further information

You can find your local BPCA member either on the website at bpca.org.uk or by calling on tel: 01332 294288

PLANT ROOM: what pests may be lurking and why?

Plant rooms may not necessarily be the first place that you consider when thinking of pest activity. Just because plant rooms aren't particularly hospitable for humans, it doesn't necessarily mean pests feel the same.

Consider what a pest typically requires to survive - warmth and harbourage (a safe place to live that is relatively undisturbed). Think of a plant room in that kind of context then it starts to become a more attractive proposition. Place that room in an environment that offers a nearby food source, such as a production line, manufacturing plant, rubbish area or kitchen, and we have a real viable living area for pests. What about the noise and moving parts present in a plant room, surely these will discourage pests? Possibly not, pest species such as rodents are skilled adaptors. They will overcome obstacles such as noise if the prize of safety, warmth and food can be obtained.

The less human disturbance the better, so a plant room which may be secured to prevent human access is perfect. Plant rooms with vents are often open to the intrusion of pests such as rodents. Mice are fantastic climbers and will have no problem gaining access to plant area from a high level if the rewards are great.

Risks from rodents

If species such as rats and mice do become resident in plant areas, there are a number of risks to be considered. Rodents can be incredibly destructive to plant and machinery if infestations go undiscovered. This is due to their need to habitually gnaw and chew. Rodents front incisor teeth grow constantly and so must be worn down by gnawing on hard surfaces. Their incredibly strong teeth can chew through wire, cables, wood, cement and even brick. A chewing rodent amongst plant machinery can cause serious damage to equipment and hours of downtime as faults are tracked down and repaired. Fire is also a real risk if cables are damaged. Destruction can also be caused by rodents nesting amongst warm machinery if debris from the nest becomes entangled in moving parts.

Insect pests

Maintenance staff that enter plant rooms should also be aware that these locations are often just as attractive to a number of insect pests as they are to rodents. Cockroach species such as the German and the Oriental cockroach are both extremely comfortable with warm areas such as plant rooms. If the sites you work on offer a combination of high temperatures, accessible food, moisture and hiding places, it could be perfect for cockroach breeding and activity.



The presence of flies is also a serious vector for disease; species such as the common house fly transmit a number of pathogens due to their unsavoury breeding habits. House flies can go through a full life-cycle from the point where they lay an egg to becoming an adult in 5 to 7 days in favourable conditions. Opening doors and windows should be screened against insect intrusion, and electronic fly killing devices should be considered to capture any fly that manages to get through your proofing measures. Scrupulous hygiene in plant room areas will also remove potential breeding sites for fly and other insect species that prefer warm, damp conditions.

Pest birds

Birds also have a habit of accessing plant rooms for warmth and shelter if given the opportunity to. Again this can cause health issues for staff coming into contact with residues. If you have had birds in a plant room and the debris has not been cleared, it is essential that you investigate a means of removing the waste. Remember, birds in the United Kingdom are protected species, you can only deal with them if they are causing certain issues using approved methods. Always consult a professional company for advice before undertaking any control measures.

Removing unwanted pests

Often, the key to pest eradication is early detection. If you are aware of pest activity in your employers or customers plant rooms, don't sit on your laurels. Inform the site and get a pest control professional to inspect and clear the problem. BPCA members are qualified, insured, are committed to Continuing Professional Development, and have access to industry leading Health and Safety consultants to ensure they are working safely and responsibly. They benefit from the backing of a world renowned not-for-profit trade association that is available to support them, and their customers with pest prevention advice and awareness training.

For more information about how the BPCA can support your organisation, please visit bpc.org.uk

Trouble on two wings tackling flying insect problems



Flying insects are a classic symptom of summertime, so much so that we almost take them for granted. A few flies in the kitchens, a bluebottle in the office, some wasps around the outdoor dining area; not ideal admittedly, but surely not a disaster? Clive Boase of Pest Management Consultancy explains.

Of course, not every fly is a disaster, but it may be a disaster waiting to happen. Every year we see incidents where flying insects create serious problems for premises and businesses. For example, a couple of summers ago, a large and very popular UK theme park found itself featured on a prime-time TV investigative show, in relation to wasp problems. A senior executive from the park admitted on the show that they had mishandled the wasp problem, and put the public at risk. On a smaller scale, but no less important to the business itself, customers of a popular coffee chain complained to their local Environmental Health Department about a fruit fly infestation. This resulted in the restaurant being closed for a week, and being featured on the front page of the regional newspaper under a damaging headline. There are many other similar cases that demonstrate not only a threat to the wellbeing of the customer, but which also have had a serious impact on the business itself.

Although most flying insects are small in size, the severity of the problems they can cause is disproportionately large. Flying insect problems fall into three main categories:

1 Nuisance

The simple presence of numbers of flying insects may be an irritating nuisance to staff, customers and residents. Guidance on the Clean Neighbourhood and Environment Act (2005) states that "As a guideline, an occupier will normally experience some irritation if there are five or more 'flying' house flies present in any one room at any one time on three successive days." Clearly, the threshold at which many guests, customers, or the public become upset by insects is relatively low, and unhappy customers lead to complaints.

2 Disease transmission

Flies are widely recognised as carriers of disease-causing organisms, and their high mobility makes them particularly effective vectors. They acquire these pathogens whilst crawling or feeding on infected materials such as waste, and may then subsequently infect human food when they alight on it. This transfer may occur simply as the fly walks on the food, but will also take place as a result of the fly's defaecation and regurgitation.

3 Prosecution and impact on brand

In any food production or sales environment, the local Environmental Health Department has a responsibility to enforce food safety and environmental health legislation. Typically EHOs will work with and advise businesses where potential insect issues

are present. However as a last resort, and where advice has not been heeded, then legal action may be taken against offenders, potentially leading to more negative exposure for the business. This negative publicity can have a significant impact on the public's and customers' perception of the brand. This in turn is likely to affect the business itself.

THE USUAL CULPRITS

In tackling fly problems, the first step is to work out what types of flies are present, or could be in the future. Identification is essential if the source of the flies is to be located, and appropriate management measures then put in place. Remember also that the fly's life cycle comprises not just the adult winged stage, but also the egg, larva (maggot) and pupal stages. Although it is the mobile adult stages that are normally of most concern, finding and removing the habitat of the preceding young stages is often key to solving the problem.

Four steps toward effective fly management

Once our pests have been identified, we can start making progress towards their prevention and elimination.

1 Find the source and remove it







Many fly problems arise within the site itself, so work with your pest control contractor to find out where the flies are coming from. They should be able to identify specific fly breeding sites, and provide you with constructive advice on how to reduce or eliminate them. For example, regularly cleaning the inside of waste bins will help reduce housefly numbers, drying out areas of wet flooring may reduce drain fly breeding, while removing sugary deposits from under bars and serveries may reduce fruit fly breeding.

2 Preventing entry

However, no matter how clean you keep your own site, there is little you can do about the surrounding area. There is the likelihood therefore, that there will be a steady flow of flying insects attempting to access your premises, throughout the warmer months and into the autumn. Window and door screens are very effective providing they are fitted and



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HOUSE FLIES	BLOW FLIES 'BLUEBOTTLES'	CLUSTER FLIES	FRUIT FLIES	DRAIN FLIES	WASPS
APPEARANCE					
Medium-sized, dark coloured fly.	Large metallic blue or green flies.	Similar to house flies, but very different behaviour.	Small (<3mm), dark, with red eyes.	Several different types. All are small (<3mm), and most are dark coloured.	Unmistakable, large, with black and yellow bands.
TYPICAL SOURCES					
The larvae live in a wide range of decaying organic waste. Food waste bins, landfill sites, and animal farms.	The larvae prefer dead or rotten meat.	The adults and young stages live outdoors in green areas for most of the warmer months.	The larvae live in decaying fruit and vegetable waste. Also in drink spillage in bars.	The larvae typically live in wet, dirty areas, such as drains, areas where waste water accumulates, wet waste bins, and sewage works.	Wasps build and live in a nest, containing up to several thousand wasps. The nest is often in roof voids, cavity walls, or other similar places.
LIKELY PROBLEMS					
The adult flies come indoors, and settle on food and surfaces, creating a nuisance and the risk of contamination.	The adults will lay their eggs on raw or cooked meat and fish. Also, a dead bird or rodent in the roof or chimney may become infested and produce hundreds of flies.	In the autumn, the adult flies will come indoors to hibernate, often in roof voids, sometimes in their thousands.	Large numbers of small flies indoors creates a nuisance, and the risk of contamination.	Large numbers of small flies indoors creates a nuisance, and the risk of contamination.	Wasp stings, nuisance to staff and customers, and the risk of contamination of food products.

maintained well. Tom Holmes of P+L Systems commented “There are a huge range of businesses that can benefit from quality fly proofing solutions – we’ve seen a large increase in the number of pest controllers specifying fly screens for ‘non-food’ sites to protect their customers and employees, including hotels and offices.”

3 Eliminate any remaining insects

At some sites, improved hygiene and proofing will together eliminate most of the flies. However, there will be many other sites where on-going fly control will be essential, to bring numbers down, and to show due diligence.

In roof voids control of cluster fly relies heavily on the careful use of insecticides during the autumn.

Similarly, at locations such as waste composting facilities, regular use of insecticides for housefly control may be essential. At food handling sites however, insecticides are less likely to be used routinely, and alternative products such as Electric Fly Killer (EFK) units are more commonly used instead.



4 Record keeping

Finally, pest control work on your site should always be documented. Your pest contractor should maintain a folder at your site, containing records of all findings and work done. Do

check the folder at intervals to make sure it meets your requirements, and if not, discuss this with your contractor.

OUT-THINKING THE FLIES

Flying insect pests will never be completely eradicated. Every summer brings a new crop of flies, wasps and other seasonal pests that will yet again threaten our premises, facilities and businesses.

Effective prevention and control of flying insects requires a close partnership between yourself and your pest control contractor. Together you need to look back at past issues to see what worked and what didn't, and learn from it. You need your contractor to assess the risks of infestation, identify any current pests, and recommend appropriate measures. They need you to ensure that proofing is maintained, waste is handled properly, and cleaning schedules followed. So, if you haven't done so already, call your pest control contractor, arrange a meeting, and draw up a proactive plan for the summer season. Careful planning now will reduce the need for fire-fighting further down the line.

Further information

Should you require further information, advice or support please contact BPCA on 01332 294288 or visit our website at bpca.org.uk

Urban Bird Control and Deterrents



The UK's urban bird population poses a major challenge for business owners and facilities managers. BPCA Technical Manager Richard Moseley looks at the hazards associated with urban birds and the control methods employed by professionals to deal with infestations.

Like all pests, urban birds such as Gulls, Pigeons, Starlings and Sparrows 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 birds can become a magnet for large thriving colonies.

Problems urban birds can cause

In the urban environment some bird species carry disease, can damage buildings, encourage insect infestations and have the potential to contaminate food. These are serious matters especially for homeowners, business owners and facilities managers who want to maintain high standards of hygiene and presentation of their buildings, both old and new.

Bird droppings are acidic and can corrode and erode metals and certain building materials such as stonework often associated with buildings of historical importance. More commonly, bird activities (specifically nesting materials, droppings and food debris) often result in gutters becoming blocked, so that rainwater drains back into the building. Whilst in some cases this may only lead to minor damp damage or increase the chances of rot, in others the problems can be more serious. Chris Turner, director of BPCA Member Rokill explains "on a recent job carcasses, droppings and nesting materials had blocked up the internal gutter and basically backed up into the store flooding the sales floor. They had to close the store for four days while it was cleaned up."

In addition, any building covered in bird fouling looks unpleasant, can smell and projects a poor image of your business; if the business cannot clean up its building, how well is it going to look after its customers? Also closely linked to bird activity are parasites such as mites, fleas and beetles. Therefore, if you have a current or past problem with urban birds, you may find you'll suffer from a parasite infestation too.

Despite all of that, the most important reason you'd want to prevent or control urban bird infestations is that there is evidence urban birds carry a wide variety of disease-causing organisms such as Salmonella, Listeria and E.coli. The chances of catching diseases from birds are fairly remote, however poor standards of hygiene after contact with bird droppings significantly increases the risk. Much more serious is the potential for inhalation of the airborne disease agents that these birds can carry. Such respiratory diseases can be fatal. In most cases, healthy people catching diseases like Ornithosis, Histoplasmosis or Cryptococcosis are hardly affected, but for more susceptible individuals such as the very young, the elderly or those with damaged immune systems, these diseases can be much more serious - critical to know if birds are found around hospitals, nurseries or nursing homes.

Proofing and control

As with any pest control problem, the starting point for urban bird management is to try to remove the reasons why the pest is present. This basically means denying the pest species access to food and

harbourage. Before employing active control methods, you need to investigate the reduction in food supplies which may be the key to controlling a population of birds. However for facilities managers who may be responsible for a group of buildings, or even an individual property, this is no easy task as it requires the support of everyone using the property to prevent access to food. According to Mark Wenman, Technical Manager at Network Bird, there are two different aspects to managing birds – single building management where proofing and deterrents are used, and area population management. “A lot can be achieved in relieving problems on individual buildings, but area management is more of a challenge,” he says. “Taking early action to prevent birds from nesting is vital as this will significantly reduce behaviour problems. If preventative measures are not put in place, you’ll find it will be too late to prevent an infestation.”

1 Proofing

Over the years a wide range of proofing tools and methods have been created to deal with bird infestations. The first principle of any proofing system is to cause the birds no lasting harm, but to prevent or discourage them from landing on buildings. There are a variety of methods, tools and techniques which can be used to great effect; spikes, nets, wiring, electric shocking systems and gels are all designed to cover harbourage areas to prevent birds from nesting and perching.

Similarly, audible and visual scaring methods such as mirrors, balloons, silhouettes and models of predatory creatures can be used to create negative associations in birds wishing to land or roost on buildings. However, these methods aren’t effective for all types of birds as they all react differently, and in some cases can lose their effectiveness over a sustained period of time. 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 can get inexperienced people that have a go at it, and sometimes trap the birds. That is not the way forward. A professional would install the netting in a specific way and at the right time of year to make sure it’s effective.”

2 Control methods

Where you have a high pressure of bird activity, and proofing options haven’t been applied in the early stages of the infestation, then effective control methods such as trapping, culling and the use of predatory birds could be employed. It is becoming increasingly common to fly live captive bred predator birds such as Hawks and Falcons to disperse pest birds from sites. Live trapping can also be useful for the removal of small local populations however, it will prove



"You can get inexperienced people that have a go at it, and sometimes trap the birds... a professional would install the netting in a specific way and at the right time of year to make sure it's effective."

ineffective with larger infestations. This is where culling may be the only viable option to help reduce populations. When used by skilled marksmen, shooting can be a very humane, killing quickly with minimal stress. However, culling is only permitted for certain species under strict conditions, and where Natural England have issued a licence that allow pest controllers, and others, to legally carry out control methods that would otherwise be unlawful under the Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981.

Selecting the right contractor...

Your selected pest control contractor should prepare, in conjunction with the client, a full bird management strategy. Such a strategy may include: the continued control of hygiene and housekeeping standards, proofing with exclusion systems to keep the birds out, and finally, where absolutely necessary control methods. Trusted contractors such as BPCA members will fully survey the premises, provide a quotation and detail the pests found, outline the treatments to be carried out and the frequency of visits. Find your local professional pest controller at bpca.org.uk

BIRD CONTROL TOOLKIT:

PROOFING TECHNIQUES AND DETERRENTS:

- Scaring – using a noise system or imitations of predatory birds to scare them away
- Netting – cover harbourage areas to prevent nesting
- Spiking – series of plastic or metal pins that prevent birds from landing
- Optical gels – gels that make the building seem as if it is on fire in the birds' vision
- Contact gels – contains an irritant that causes discomfort if the bird comes into contact with the gel
- Electric systems – give the bird a slight shock to deter them, but causes no lasting harm
- Trapping – live capture traps set and visited by the pest controller on a regular basis
- Shooting – may not be appropriate in high pressure areas
- Food restriction – an essential part of any pest control measure
- Predatory birds – flying natural predators to mark their territory



BPCA online

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- 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

You can also search for a local consultant pest expert to audit your existing contract, provide independent advice or provide training.

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