

FIRE AND PESTS

Maintaining fire protection integrity



Also in this issue:

GREEN PEST CONTROL

Insuring against pest damage

WEIL'S DISEASE: CONSTRUCTION'S SILENT KILLER



Bridging a gap
Preservation and pest control in buildings from the outset



Ground control
Common pests around buildings

Pest control and the law
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contents



09

PEST CONTROL AND THE LAW

The common legal pitfalls around pest control, and how to avoid the wrong side of the law.



24

BRIDGING A GAP IN CURRENT THINKING

The case for spending on preservation and pest control at the design phase.



18

WEIL'S DISEASE

Construction's silent killer.



41

INSURING AGAINST PEST DAMAGE

Your business may be at risk from inadequate cover.

4 Guest leader: constructing ideal pest control

BPCA chief executive, Simon Forrester looks at what's in store for you in this issue of **alexo**.

5 News

Rats at the BBC, fake fire for pigeon control, pests on the menu, and more – the latest pest control news.

31 BPCA member directory

Looking for a quality, expert pest management outfit? The directory has the company you're looking for!

39 BPCA member market spot

Spotlight on companies from the BPCA membership.

43 Final cuts

Invasion of the Super Ant! and a look forward to Issue Three.

Features this issue

9 Pest control and the law

Public health pest control is a legal minefield. We show you how to stay safe – and out of court

14 Top marks or room for improvement?

What an inspection report should say.

15 Fire and pests

A growing number of fires are spread via pests and poor fire protection. We look at how to prevent pest-related fire in buildings.

18 Weil's Disease: construction's silent killer

The deadly disease affecting pest controllers and construction workers alike.

20 Green pest control

More and more clients are insisting on green pest control. Stuart Spear investigates.

24 Bridging a gap in current thinking

The case for preservation and pest control being built in at the design stage.

28 Ground control: common pests around buildings

The space in and around your building is home to many pests protected by law. We look at the pitfalls awaiting the unwary.

41 Insuring against pest damage

Does your policy cover damage by pest species? Karl King of Bridge Insurance explains how to stay covered.

alexo

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Building better pest control



Welcome to issue two of **alexo**, with a focus on construction. As we head towards Winter, the most prevalent pest species move from wasps and flying insects to rodents, as the latter seek food and shelter in buildings. We look at how the area around your buildings can not only encourage but harbour pests, and how to stay on the right side of the law when dealing with pest infestations.



Sustainability is key in construction, and being green is permeating every aspect of our lives – pest control being no exception. Our article on page 20 explains how Integrated Pest Management can deliver the same or better results using a fraction of the resources – saving you time, money and keeping the planet healthy!

This issue we've joined up with the Property Care Association to bring you the case for introducing preservation and pest control measures in buildings from the outset, something which will become more important as our little island becomes more and more urbanised.

Many people responsible for buildings won't know that their insurances are unlikely to cover them for pest activity, and the huge damage pests can do. Read more about this on page 41, and the linked article on fire and pests.

“Sustainability is key in construction, and being green is permeating every aspect of our lives – pest control being no exception.”

We have a piece on the ongoing problem of Weil's Disease – a potentially deadly disease that impacts on both construction and pest control operatives.

If you'd like to see something featured in the next issue (which focuses on hospitality), get in touch via our reader survey at www.alexo.org.uk/survey – and congratulations to the winner of the last kindle e-reader, Mrs Campion, a care home manager from London.

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www.alexo.org.uk
www.bpca.org.uk

The Society of Food Hygiene and Technology Pest control training course - 14 December 2011



Pests are a leading cause of poor food hygiene and 'prevention is better than cure'. This one day course focuses on preventing problems from occurring and demonstrates how businesses can save money and vitally their reputation.

The course includes sections covering the health dangers posed by insects, birds and rodents, how they threaten food processing and preparation. Also covered are techniques and strategies that will

prevent problems occurring, particularly how to stop pests entering a premises; how to spot evidence of an infestation and how to treat and control any that do happen. Finally the course shows delegates the key factors to look for when entering a specialist pest control contract.

Cost: £145 + VAT (member) £195 + VAT (non-member)

www.sofht.co.uk

Millennium falcons



A pair of one of the UK's rarest birds are nesting and breeding in a secret location near Sittingbourne in Kent.

Keen falconer Dave Green from BPCA member company NBC Bird and Pest Solutions spotted the peregrine falcons last year and soon realised they would need assistance to encourage them to stay and breed successfully. Where he found them was not the ideal spot as their natural habitat tends to be upland and coastal areas.

Mr Green, NBC's local area manager, together with the land owners, created a custom-made nesting pan from the base of a 45 gallon drum filled with pea shingle. This was placed close to the original site.

Because the birds are so rare in Britain, they have become a target for criminals who steal their eggs to supply to collectors or the falconry trade. In the 1960s there were only 360 breeding pairs in existence, compared to 1,402 now. Dave contacted the police and Natural England for help in assisting the birds and the police installed special movement cameras, offering 24-hour protection.

Settled into their man-made nest, the peregrines laid the first of four eggs on March 29 this year. Around a month later the eggs hatched and all four chicks were reared by both parents. They were closely monitored until they were old enough to be ringed and since then, they have fledged and are currently being taught to hunt.

Experts from Natural England have also weighed the birds and taken DNA samples. Once the young have matured, they will take off to find their own territories. Because the current nesting site is not ideal, a purpose-built box has been placed close by to encourage the birds to remain and breed.

Dave said: "I knew in order to maximise the birds' chances of breeding successfully, I would need to ensure they were protected." Peregrines and their nests are protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 and penalties for taking or disturbing the birds or their eggs, carry a heavy fine – or even a custodial sentence. It is to protect the birds that the exact location of their nest is being kept secret.

To find out how birds of prey help control pest species, see the next issue of **alexo**.

www.naturalengland.org.uk

alexo gets noticed!

Issue one of **alexo** was sent to 5,000 pest control customers, and initial feedback from readers has been very positive, with comments such as 'well put together' and 'well produced, informative and easily readable'. We even had (faint) praise from Julie Girling MEP, who said 'I see a lot of magazines, but this is one I'll actually read'.

And **alexo** isn't just making waves with customers. The Society of Food Hygiene and Technology (SOFHT) has recognised **alexo** by shortlisting the launch issue for its prestigious awards, which are to be announced at their annual lunch in London just after we go to press.

Fingers crossed!

www.sofht.co.uk

www.alexo.org.uk



Small businesses get pestered

Silvio Berlusconi isn't the only pest making the headlines recently: a survey of 500 small business owners by Rentokil has found that more than one in 10 has had a pest infestation over the past year. Having pests poses obvious threats, particularly if your business deals with food or its handling. Rather sweetly, though, businesses seemed more worried about relationships with their employees than anything else: 53% said they were most concerned about what workers would think. Naturally, though, reputation came close, with 50% saying that having unwelcome guests could damage their reputation, and 47% thought it would have an effect on relationships with customers.

What's causing this epidemic? Almost 80% blame it on cleaners, saying a lack of effective (any?) cleaning attracts vermin, while 64% say it happens when rubbish is left in office bins overnight. 56% say it's due to a communal kitchen (but presumably the other points are still relevant), and 54% point to eating at desks.

The strong recommendation is to draw up a 'pest strategy' to include staff training, removal of food sources, and of course a proper pest control contract.

www.rentokil.co.uk

TOP PESTS

mice

39%



rats

36%



wasps

16%



Fake fire keeps roof gardens pigeon-free



A gel which tricks birds into thinking buildings are on fire has been used to keep pigeons off a prestigious London building. Virgin's world-famous Roof Gardens in Kensington offer an idyllic setting for dining, film shoots and other private events. Located high above Kensington High Street, the exotic nature of The Roof Gardens' flora and fauna, which include resident flamingos, means that controlling feral pigeons is of paramount importance. In some cases spikes and netting cannot be used, which is where the Bird

Free fire gel comes into its own.

David Lewis, head gardener at The Roof Gardens, said "We have been using Bird Free to keep pigeons off this exposed roof area for over a year now, and it's both unobtrusive and extremely effective."

The product appears as an orange gel to humans but to pigeons, who are able to see ultraviolet light, it looks like flames, deterring them from landing on their favourite buildings. The combination of herbal oils within the product is also abhorrent to birds' senses of

smell and taste. Should a bird or other pest come into direct contact with the gel it produces a stinging sensation (comparable to stinging nettles on humans) which will cause no lasting injury, but which will cause minor discomfort until the effects wear off. The gel has already been successfully used in car parks in Horsham and Crawley by BPCA member Beaver Pest Control earlier this year, and is in trials with a variety of building management companies across the UK. David Lodge of Beaver said "The gel has

proven to be a great addition to our armoury of bird management products, and we have had some excellent results so far."

Ian Smith, director of the product's UK distribution agent JJBio (UK) Ltd, said "The product has been approved by both the RSPB and the Health & Safety Executive. The active ingredients are food-grade natural oils, so it's safe to use around food manufacturing plants or anywhere biocides might cause problems."

www.pestcontrolservices.co.uk

FERA and NBC study island rat populations

Scottish Natural Heritage has appointed a specialist team consisting of the Food and Environment Research Agency (FERA) and NBC Bird and Pest Solutions on a 3 year research contract to work on the Isle of Rum, a national nature reserve off Scotland.

Selected by FERA, NBC will provide operational support, gathering data to help determine the impact of the brown rat on Manx Shearwater breeding success. NBC has significant experience in dealing with, and understanding sensitive environmental and wildlife issues, having previously worked with Government on other projects.

The Manx Shearwater (*Puffinus puffinus*) is a medium

sized seabird that lays its eggs in burrows, making them easy targets for rats in search of a meal.

Upwards of 100,000 Manx Shearwater migrate to Rum from South America each year during the Spring. In recent years the breeding success of the Manx Shearwater has declined, and scientists suspect the main culprit to be rodent activity.

FERA and NBC will monitor the brown rat activity across three study zones within the Shearwater nesting grounds. One area shall be treated in the first year to control rat activity and the Shearwater breeding success within this area will be assessed against the two control zones. The research will be extended through the following two breeding years to determine whether island-wide control of rats is required to protect the Shearwater colony in the long term.

During the Summer months the burrows are inspected to check fledgling Manx Shearwater success before their migration in the Autumn, when they leave for wintering in warmer climes.

The NBC team continue to make regular visits to the Isle of Rum and will continue to participate in the project until its conclusion in 2013.

www.nbcbirdandpest.co.uk

www.isleofrum.com



Warning on dog detectives

As most pest controllers will tell you, removing a bed bug infestation is difficult. But detecting them in the first place is just as hard. Bed bugs live behind skirting boards, under floors and in bed frames, coming out at night to feast on blood. This makes them more difficult to detect – for humans at least.

Bed bugs emit a pheromone that can be smelt by dogs but not people. A dog's odour image is significantly more complex than a human's perception of photographs, so trained dogs can sniff out bed bugs, just as others can do for explosives or drugs. Use of bed bug detecting canines has been acknowledged in courts around the world as an effective tool. In the USA scent detection dogs are acknowledged by the courts as scientific instruments (see **alexo** issue one, page six).

Adam Juson of Merlin Environmental trains and uses bed bug dogs. "Humans are traditionally limited to visual inspections, which is less accurate and can take up to 20 minutes per room compared to two to three minutes for a dog. Bed bug dogs are accurate over 90% of the time."

But not all dogs are equal. Juson says "It's vital to ensure the dog has been trained properly, or there is a likelihood the dog will fail to detect the pest, causing longer-term issues, or simply trick its handler in order to get treats or stop work. I have been contacted by clients who have used so-called bed bug dogs who proved to be just family pets, untrained and basically of no use."

In the US dozens of dogs trained to sniff out bed bugs have been put to the test at a hotel. Dogs receive certification if they can find escape-proof vials containing up to 20 of the blood-sucking insects hidden in some of the guest rooms. The US National Pest Management Association says training a dog properly takes several months and can cost around \$10,000 (£6,300). BPCA is working to establish UK standards for bed bug dogs and other animals used for detection.

Juson also recommends caution regarding the other part of the detection team – the handler. "Any operative looking after a detection dog needs to have been trained to a high standard. They have responsibilities to the animals in their care, and need to understand the dogs' limitations. Dogs get 'scent-tired', and so must be rested on a regular basis. Therefore, a company must have sufficient trained animals to allow them to remove dogs from service without affecting the service to clients."

www.bedbug-dogs.co.uk



STRICTLY COME RATTING

The BBC newsroom in Wood Lane, West London has been overrun with rodents – with the problem getting so bad that some female staff are threatening to walk out. But the rats are now tango-ing down the corridors to the dressing rooms used by the stars of Strictly Come Dancing.

There are now around half a dozen reported sightings a day, and worried bosses have called in pest control specialists. BBC bosses have set up a rodent sighting hotline and sent an email to staff to try to reassure them.

One worker said "It is a major problem with some women in the newsroom threatening to down tools and walk out. People are seriously unhappy, because this should have been dealt with properly when it was first reported."

A BBC spokesman said "Mice have been spotted. This problem is not uncommon, particularly at this time of year as falling temperatures drive rodents indoors. The BBC now has a contract with a specialist pest control company."

www.ecolab.co.uk



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Squirrels saved from extinction - by diners!

According to Oxford University's Wildlife Conservation Research Unit (WildCRU), our very own red squirrels (*Sciurus vulgaris*) could be extinct on mainland Britain within 20 years. Red squirrel populations in the UK have continued to fall over the last decade despite efforts to protect them, says the 2011 State of Britain's Mammals study, commissioned by animal charity the People's Trust for Endangered Species.

The author of the research, Professor David Macdonald said "We expect the future of red squirrels to be confined to a few islands, such as Anglesey and the Isle of Wight, or in the Highlands of Scotland." Our native reds have been edged out over many years by both habitat destruction and the introduction of the grey squirrel (*Sciurus carolinensis*), a larger and more aggressive species which also carries a disease lethal to reds.

But help is coming from an unlikely source. Diners in restaurants across the UK are seeing a new menu item – grey squirrel, served in a variety of guises. Much of squirrels' growing popularity as a foodstuff has been credited to TV

chefs like Hugh Fearnley-Whittingstall who have praised the meat's low-fat and environmentally-friendly credentials.

Food critic Jay Rayner believes we have developed a fascination for unusual food in Britain. "People may say they are buying it because it's green and environmentally friendly, but really they're doing it out of curiosity and because of the novelty value," he said. In fact, some claim that squirrel is about as ethical a dish as it is possible to serve on a dinner plate, hence the demand. Patriotism also plays a part: 'Eat a grey and save a red' is the message often used.

But will eating grey squirrel actually help native reds? Dr Craig Shuttleworth, an ecologist at the Anglesey Red Squirrel project, thinks so: "I've cooked them myself and they are very tasty, are found in abundance, and are fresh and organic. Why not use the meat of an animal which is being controlled anyway throughout the country to protect woodland and the red squirrel? My message is to eat as many grey squirrels as you can, because there are an awful lot out there."

Cordon Gris – where to eat grey squirrel

Peking duck-style squirrel pancakes

The Famous Wild Boar Hotel, Windermere, Cumbria

Squirrel patés and fricassees

Otterton Mill, nr Budleigh Salterton, Devon

Saddle of squirrel with nut sauce

Tapsters Bar, Newnham, Kent

Squirrel pasties

Traeth Restaurant, New Quay, Wales

Squirrel ragout

River Cottage Canteen, Axminster, Devon

Confit of squirrel in a chestnut terrine

Marfen Hall Hotel, Hexham, nr Newcastle

Bed bugs hotel infestation

Leeds-based Pestek Pest Control recently cleared a large bed bug infestation at a hotel in the Midlands – almost half of the one hundred rooms were affected.



The initial treatment was carried out over a weekend as this was the hotel's quietest period. Technicians using insecticide and super-heated vapour to help speed up the eradication process, worked into the night to ensure the work was completed on time.

Pestek's managing director David Etherington said "It's inevitable that such a busy hotel will be exposed again, but we have trained the staff to know what to look for and more importantly where to look for it. Therefore future treatments can be started before additional rooms are affected. Around 70% of our work is dealing with bed bug infestations, mainly in domestic properties but increasingly in hotels across the north of England."

For a feature article on bed bug infestations and how to deal with them, see the next issue of **alexo**.

www.pestek.co.uk

Behind the scenes at Westminster Council

The inner workings of central London are being revealed in a six-part series by Popkorn TV, currently airing on Channel 5, which follows staff from Westminster Council as they go about their day to day jobs running the city. The series, called London: The Inside Story, goes behind the scenes of Britain's busiest borough to reveal the people and jobs that keep the capital moving, and features both the pest control team battling rats and maggots, and the food inspectors who monitor standards in takeaways, street stalls and Michelin restaurants.

Jacqueline Trisk, Popkorn's Series Producer said: "When you think of a council you



imagine it consists of a lot of people going from one meeting to another, drowning in paperwork. The most fascinating thing for me has been getting behind the scenes and discovering a whole host of jobs that I never knew existed, from arranging funerals to eradicating bed bugs...and a lot more in between."

The series is broadcast every Tuesday at 8pm on Channel 5.

<http://goo.gl/ysVMr>

Hazel Davis shows you the common legal pitfalls around pest control, and how to avoid the wrong side of the law.

You have responsibility for a building of some sort. A building site, restaurant, offices, hotel or private school. You think you've got rats. No problem, just call the council, they'll deal with it, job's a good 'un. No harm done. Right?

Not necessarily. You are responsible for dealing with any pests you find on your own property, or any property for which you have a duty of care. Your local authority may provide a pest control service (though that's increasingly rare in these times), but they will probably charge for it. Some good news: if you are a private or social housing tenant, responsibility for pest control may be down to your landlord and if the local authority owns the land it's down to them to fix it. But for almost all other premises it's your task to keep things pest-free. Even if you don't know you have pests but someone else reports you, you might be liable for local authority costs if they are forced to come and fix the problem.

So you'll need to call in a pest controller. But are all pest control companies equal, and what if mine lets me down? Well luckily you've picked up **alexo**, so you're half way there to knowing what to do.

A common concern for premises managers is once they call in a contractor, who then claims to have dealt with the pest and pest-proofs the property, yet somehow the pest still remains. Choosing the right pest controller in the first place can eliminate some potential problems of this type. Says Chris Parmiter, regional director of Barrettine Environmental Health, "Legislation, changing pests and more demanding customer expectations have transformed the face of pest control over the years so it's essential that those servicing, supplying and advising the sector are fully qualified and trained to meet the challenge."

/continued over...

Pest control and the law



“If you think hiring a professional is expensive, try hiring an amateur.” Red Adair

So, what qualifications does a pest controller actually have to present you with? Current legislation requires pest control technicians to be ‘properly trained and competent’ but what does that mean?

The BASIS PROMPT register is an industry initiative ensuring professional pest controllers can show that they’ve received the proper training (see summary opposite) and have a suitable level of competence. All members of the PROMPT scheme have to go through many hours of Continuing Professional Development (CPD) each year to keep up to date with legislation and Health & Safety, as well as the latest products and techniques. So one way of knowing your pest controller is competent is to check whether they are a member of BASIS PROMPT.

However, Parmiter agrees it’s still a relatively unregulated industry compared to many: “The consequence of not following the rules can range from treatment failures at one end to possible prosecution or worse at the other.” Barrettine offers its pest control customers free advice on the implications of their actions, whether it’s the application of chemicals or something a bit more vague.

Simon Forrester, BPCA chief executive notes “As well as its staff holding membership of the PROMPT scheme, accreditation by a trade body like BPCA offers extra peace of mind. They will have been thoroughly checked not only on applying to join, but at regular intervals thereafter. As with all schemes and logos, it’s buyer beware – check if a pest controller is actually a member of that scheme, and what it really means. Sadly it’s far too easy to just buy a badge.” To find out more about the BPCA scheme see page 31.

Once your appointed contractor is on site, ask to see the BASIS PROMPT card for their technician. If the employee doesn’t hold one, ask yourself whether you are happy for them to apply pesticides on your premises. Would you allow a dentist to drill your teeth or an electrician to wire your house without feeling confident they knew their job properly?

Pest control companies can also seek approval from Trading Standards under their ‘Buy with Confidence’ Scheme, and some join CHAS, ConstructionLine or SAFEContractor to show their competence. You can check whether these are bona fide by visiting the relevant websites.

In these difficult financial times, should price be the deciding factor? Forrester has some sage advice: “It’s clear that professionals have higher overheads than those who don’t have trained staff, insurances or proper equipment – so they will cost more to hire. But Red Adair once said “if you think hiring a professional is expensive, try hiring an amateur” – it’s as true for pest control as it is for fighting oil rig fires. BPCA often receives calls from companies who have chosen the lowest quote from the phone book, or hired their



QUALIFIED TO HELP

BASIS PROMPT full members have one of the following qualifications:

- RSPH/BPCA Level 2 Award or Certificate in Pest Management
- RSPH/BPCA Level 2 Certificate in Pest Control
- Royal Society of Health Pest Control Certificate
- BPCA Diploma, Part I or II, or
- A Certificate issued by a recognised national body as being of similar standing.

window cleaner to deal with a pest problem. They then call us to find a professional to help them deal with the issue properly.”

Sadly the amateur (ie. cowboy) pest controller won’t understand the pest species, nor will they have ready or legal access to the chemicals that professionals use. This is a dangerous mix, and often leads to the amateur throwing down many times the quantity of chemicals needed to deal with the pest. Richard Moseley, BPCA technical manager says “I’ve heard of people with a rat problem hiring a chap in the pub who throws large amounts of bait onto a bird table, because that’s where he’s seen the rats active. They don’t realise the seriousness of what they are doing, and often end up in court being prosecuted by Natural England or the RSPCA after harming local wildlife or a family pet.”

It’s clearly vitally important not to cut corners when engaging the services of a pest controller. The client must ensure the service that is being paid for is good enough to cover due diligence and duty of care requirements required by law.

So what sorts of ways can pest control actually fall foul of the law? Steve Hughes is an Environmental Health Officer. He explains that, “in addition to damage to property and stock, contamination of work surfaces and foodstuffs, adverse publicity and poor staff/management relationships, the presence of pests can carry the risk of prosecution or closure of premises.” He adds, “The EU Regulation 852/2004 on the hygiene of foodstuffs requires food businesses to take adequate measures to prevent food contamination by pests.”

Other legislation to note is the Prevention of Damage by Pests Act 1949 which requires property owners to keep their land free from rats and mice, and the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 which imposes duties on businesses towards both their employees and those using their premises, for example customers or hotel guests.

There's a further bewildering list of legislation relating to pest control to be aware of, including the Poisons Act (1972), the Protection of Animals Act (1911) and the Control of Pollution Act (1974). The Chartered Institute of Environmental Health (CIEH) National Pest Advisory Panel (NPAP) has produced a number of guidance notes for various sectors including hospitality and housing, and these outline the law as it relates to each sector.

The average person might think "Can't I just deal with pest problems myself?" Under the Control of Pesticides Regulations 1986 and 1997 it is an offence for a professional use only pesticide to be used by a non-professional user (someone trained and competent as above). One problem is that it is not actually an offence for a manufacturer or distributor to sell or supply these pesticides to an unqualified purchaser and there is currently nothing which monitors this usage. This means you may well be able to purchase the correct product but could fall foul of the law if you decide to use it.

Similarly, were a pest problem to have a public health impact, it is likely that the court would look unfavourably on untrained amateurs attempting pest control. According to CIEH research, amateur users frequently misinterpret safety instructions correctly or misapply treatments. Some users believe that it's a good idea to keep rodenticides "topped up" so that there is bait available at all times – a clear breach of regulations.

Should a pest controller leave documentation?

Documentation is a legal requirement under COSHH and a good pest controller should supply sufficient paperwork. This shows diligence and job done properly, and also gives a paper trail should something go wrong. Your pest controller should provide you with a main site inspection report sheet. According to BPCA member Check Services, this information "makes the difference between an informed customer, and a customer 'left in the dark'."

Lots of pest controllers still use the 'old-fashioned' paper and pen method, and this is perfectly adequate as long as it's done properly but many now embrace technology such as digital pen systems which encode the written form, so there's an electronic copy of any paperwork. Bradford-based company Clearwell Pest Control Services has devised its own 'Clearweb' internet-based reporting service. This incorporates the use of PDA technology with all reports, including digital photography, data graphs and a KPI scoring system. Its Premier reporting service incorporates all the pest control requirements of a food production site. The advantages of such a system are obvious, and in court can significantly improve a due diligence defence.

/continued over...

Why do I need records? Dr Ed Blane, Wildlife Management Team Leader for Natural England, explains...

In the event of emergencies

If a product is used correctly there should be no problem, but incidents do happen. Pets and people may access unprotected rodenticide baits and other pesticides, and this may result in contamination by skin absorption, inhalation or direct consumption. The first question any vet or doctor will ask is "what was the poison?" Pest control records need to be available at the treatment site to provide this information. Records need to state which product and active ingredient has been used at each location on each visit by the pest controller to the site. Some pest control firms provide details of the products they are using when they start a contract but years later the products may have changed, and the new products are not detailed on the treatment records – situations where the only words written on the treatment records are 'topped up bait onsite' or 'wasp nest treated as requested' are not acceptable.

For good pest management

A professional pest controller will be regularly reviewing his treatment strategy, asking questions such as:

- Is the use of pesticides still justified?

- Am I still using the right product?
- Can I use non-toxic monitoring products rather than active pesticides when no infestations are present, or can I find a less toxic product presenting less risk of environmental contamination?
- Am I using the right amounts and bait locations?
- Does the risk assessment need amending (e.g. is there a new public access on the site)?
- Have the products' instructions changed?
- Have species such as red kites been released in the area?

Detailed treatment and survey records are essential for good pest management and long term monitoring. Treatment sites, whether they are farms or factories, homes or hospitals, are rarely constant and the approach a pest controller takes must reflect this.

For when contracts end

The outgoing pest controller should remove any pesticide from the site. Frequently this does not happen. One of the biggest complaints from pest controllers who have just taken over a new site is that the bait from the last company

who treated the site (often several months before) is still down and often in unsafe locations where pets, wildlife or people may have been able to access it.

Good treatment records indicating all the locations where pesticides have been used are essential for making a site safe when the control finishes and the products need to be removed. Good paperwork from a previous pest control company also assists a new contractor in planning their pest management strategy, and allows the new company to ensure that old rodenticides are removed from the site.

To assist in incident investigations

When incidents happen, investigating officers, whether from local authorities, Government departments (Health and Safety Executive & Natural England) or the police will need access to paperwork to establish what happened. These investigations can identify failures in how the pesticides were being used or if malicious third parties were responsible. The failure to maintain good paperwork can significantly impede and delay an investigation and prevent improvements being introduced.

“...in some sections of the Act, the maximum fine a magistrates’ court may set is £20,000 for each offence.”

I’m in court. What should I do?

So somehow you have managed to fall foul of the law. How you got here isn’t our business, but you do need to know what you need to defend yourself.

Section 21 of the Food Safety Act provides the defence of “due diligence” if you are able to prove that all reasonable precautions have been taken. Engaging the services of local authority or commercial pest control services can be put forward as part of a due diligence defence (which is why it’s essential to have an electronic or paper trail as above).

Professor Moray Anderson regularly works as an expert witness in pest control cases, providing biological knowledge usually used in prosecutions. Usually, he says, these prosecutions come about due to products being used inappropriately or ineffective pest control. The main problem, he says, is that a company will hire a pest control company who make certain recommendations and these recommendations aren’t carried out. “It’s the job of the proprietor to carry these out,” he says, “but it should also be down to the pest controller to chase them up and make sure they are happening and if not, why not.”

It’s clear that if a pest controller makes a recommendation to a client, and they fail to carry this out, the prosecution will use this as proof of failure to deal with the pest problem. Forrester says “many recent cases have been open-and-shut because the client didn’t implement the recommendations of the pest controller, thinking the pest problem had gone away once the contract was signed. It is a partnership arrangement between client and contractor, and if either fails to do their bit the problem will likely reoccur – to the detriment of both parties.”

Professor Anderson remembers a recent case involving a food premises with a house above it. The residents had a mouse problem and had work to be done which they had never carried out. In the end the court deemed that while the occupants were liable, the pest controller should have been more fastidious. “What this shows,” says Professor Anderson, “is that it can be a very grey area. Even the word ‘infestation’ is open to debate in a court.”

Due diligence for the customer comes in, he says, when the owner of the property assumes that their pest control company are looking after things, when they may not be carrying out their end of the bargain. “And it’s usually up to the prosecution to prove that the company hired is not up to the job.”

What might my punishment be?

It varies according to the offence and severity, but a significant fine is likely if found guilty. Under the Food Safety Act, for example, if you are found to have grown, stored, prepared, transported or sold

How to stay out of court

Dr Ed Blane from Natural England offers advice...

- Check out the pest control company you want to appoint – ask for references from local businesses, get them in writing, and check that they are legitimate.
- Ensure that the pest control company you are using has staff who are trained and competent to carry out the work. You can ask to see the training certificates – make sure it’s an exam they have passed (not just a ‘training day’) and has been supplied by nationally recognised training bodies. Do the technicians on site hold the PROMPT card?
- Is the company a member of any other schemes like Buy with Confidence, CHAS or SAFEContractor? All these help build a picture of the company having a due diligence approach to the important aspects of pest control.
- Check that the company is using products in accordance with the conditions and instructions on the product label, which should be available on request. If the label conditions are not being followed then the pesticides may be being used illegally – this could result in enforcement action and bad publicity for your business.
- Make sure the pest controller gives you proper paperwork (to HSE standard MISC515 or in accordance with BPCA advice). Ensure that you can understand the treatment records and plans provided by your pest controller. Both you and they must sign to say what work has been done and whose responsibility things are.
- Can you locate all the baiting / monitoring points on your site? This is especially important when site maintenance work is being carried out – the time most boxes get damaged. A broken bait box results in bait being exposed and the potential for non-target species to consume the bait. When panels and other structures are moved on site this might result in trays of bait being exposed. Plan your maintenance work with pest control in mind – you may need to get your pest controller you re-locate his bait stations prior to maintenance work being done.
- Ensure that the company’s pest controllers talk to your staff to establish and review the risks on the site. Remember that good pest control is a partnership and both partners need to have a commitment to communicate! A good pest controller will explain how the work is being carried out and ensure that the client understands.
- If your pest control company offers you advice (and the good, professional ones will) on how to manage your site to reduce pest problems, follow this advice! You are employing a professional – in the long term this advice will save you money, safeguard the environment and be a credit to your business.

REMEMBER!In-depth
pest control
company
directory
from page 31

A cautionary tale

An animal sanctuary received a £45,500 bill in fines and costs after three workers were exposed to a potentially lethal toxin. The men were struck down at Redwings Horse Sanctuary near Norwich while stacking bales which had been treated with rat poison.

Judge Fraser Morrison at Norwich Crown Court refused to accept mitigation the sanctuary was unaware of the rat poison, Phostoxin, which had been used to deal with a vermin problem. In a report to the court two of the men were described as suffering from breathing difficulties and other disorders. The sanctuary admitted at an earlier hearing failing to ensure the safety of its employees.

At that hearing the court heard managers Edward Platts and Graham Parkinson had been told by general manager Philip York to "sort out a vermin problem at a donkey barn" at one of the leased farms.

Neither of the two managers had any training in the use of poisons but they broke into a security cabinet with bolt croppers to find the rat poison which they dispensed in the barn without telling anyone.

Phostoxin gives off fumes which are potentially lethal, and is approved for outdoor use only by trained professionals. When the workers went into the barn unaware of the danger they became ill. Both of the managers must pay almost £3,000 each, and the sanctuary received significant negative media publicity.

When pesticides are not used correctly this can result in the exposure of people, animals and the environment to poisons, sometimes with serious and even fatal consequences.

The law requires that anyone who uses a pesticide must take all reasonable precautions to protect the health of human beings, creatures and plants, safeguard the environment and in particular avoid the pollution of water. A legitimate pest controller will have been trained and be able to produce training certificates if asked. They will also be able to produce appropriate paperwork relating to the treatments they carry out and provide a copy of these papers to their client. This would help to demonstrate that the pest controller took reasonable precautions. Keeping paperwork is best practice and does not just include treatment records, but also information such as site plans indicating where pesticides have been used, product information, instructions as to how to handle accidents and site specific assessments of the risks to people, animals and the general environment.

food injurious to health, the maximum penalty can be up to two years imprisonment/unlimited fines by a crown court and up to £5,000 per offence/six month prison sentence from a magistrates court. However, in some sections of the Act, the maximum fine a magistrates' court may set is £20,000 for each offence. And that's nothing compared to the damage to your brand and reputation.

Pests and residential landlords

Landlords, including Housing Associations (RSLs) are responsible for dealing with pest problems in or on their property. The local council has no statutory obligation to provide pest control to tenants of private landlords or housing associations, regardless of whether they receive council tax benefits or housing benefits.

Housing association or private sector tenants who spot a pest problem must inform their landlord and the landlord must take immediate action to (a) eradicate the pest and (b) rectify any causes (such as poor hygiene, poor housekeeping, poor pest-proofing, etc).

Summary

What it all comes down to is choosing a pest controller who you are confident knows their responsibilities under the law and will be vigilant in their inspections and treatments. It's also about listening to what they say and taking their recommendations. Do this, and in the unlikely event of a day in court, you will have a solid defence to back you up.



Hazel Davis is a West Yorkshire-based freelance journalist writing for, among others, the Guardian, Times, Financial Times and the 'glossy' market on a whole range of subjects. She has edited a national classical music and community music magazine and has a keen interest in recruitment issues. She regularly writes on pest control and environmental health matters and can usually be seen hastily scribbling at the back of major pest events.

Top marks or room for improvement?



Chartered Marketer Dee Blick examines pest controllers' reports and how to gauge their quality.

Your pest control technician has just completed his inspection of your premises and signed off the report that shows you what he's accomplished. Depending on the sophistication or otherwise of the system being used, you either get a paper copy of the report or, if it's in 'The Cloud', available to you at any time, any place.

What do you do with the report? Give it a cursory glance or study it in some depth? Because if you're doing the former you are in danger of missing out on some valuable advice and there may even be a need for you to take corrective action.

Ralph Izod, Managing Director of Dyno-Pest elaborates: "A proper technician's report will always detail recommendations for the client to implement, with a remit to either eliminate or reduce the need for remedial treatment. Let's say a technician finds food debris in a hotel kitchen, tucked away under the units, and notes this in his report, together with recommendations for the housekeeping team. If his advice is overlooked or ignored, it's usually only a matter of time before there's an infestation of flies and fruit

flies – pests that are probably not included in the original contract. By ignoring this advice, the client is incurring extra work and costs to treat this infestation."

In it together

A proactive and pro-client technician will always be identifying ways in which you can work together as partners against pests. "It's important that you understand everything in the report, that whenever possible you discuss the content with the technician before they leave, and above all that you challenge a conspicuous lack of recommendations and lack of content in general," continues Ralph. "Your technician's reports are part of an ongoing audit trail that enables you to identify any recurring trends and to measure the impact of the pest prevention strategies that you have implemented in the light of the recommendations they contain. Pay attention to those recommendations, act on each one and you'll benefit with a pest-free building."

Content is king

The quality and depth of the advice yielded in the technician's report is undeniably important, as is the need to provide a detailed explanation of the inspection undertaken. If your technician's report is no more than a line or two of hard-to-read scribble you should demand more!



Please clean under coffee machine.



Hole in loading bay needs blocking.



There is a build up of wet food debris under the coffee machine in the first floor tea point that requires urgent cleaning as it will provide an ideal breeding ground for fruit fly to re-infest this area.



There is a gap around the AC pipes in the loading bay behind the cage that I would like to seal to prevent mice access into the building. This will require the moving of your secure cage in this area so I can gain access. Please contact me when you are able to do this so I can arrange this work.

Fire and pests

Within the lifetime of a building many changes can take place. Whether a refurbishment, change of use or a complete refit; openings in compartment walls may be required to make way for new cabling, piping or ducting, walls moved or extensions added. Every time a penetration is made within the fabric of a building, one runs the risk of affecting not only the fire protection measures installed, but also the ingress and mobility of pest species.

Fire

By necessity, refurbishing a building requires elements to be fitted through walls and floors, either through existing apertures or purpose-cut holes. The process is an everyday matter and providing it is re-sealed, one not of undue concern unless the wall or floor in question happens to be constructed to form part of the building's fire compartmentation.

In such situations it is essential that the puncture in the fire wall or floor is reinstated correctly using appropriate fire stopping measures, thus ensuring that the opening around the pipework or cable is restored to its original intended fire rating and the penetration itself is equally protected. Failure to do so will place all the occupants at risk from smoke and fire spread. It will also be contrary to the building regulations in accordance with Approved Document B, will invalidate the Fire Risk Assessment, which forms part of the building owner's responsibility to comply with the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 and render the 'Competent Person' carrying out the works, liable.

/continued over...



“The Building Regulations are clear. For a solution to be acceptable, it must be shown by test to work.”

For both new build and refurbishment, compartments are essential for life safety and property protection in the event of a fire, and work by limiting the spread of fire and smoke. Fire stopping allows for the reinstatement of breaches in compartment walls and floors.

Following the Government white paper on Fire Service Reform, the Fire Service is responsible for not only identifying the root cause of a fire, but additionally looking at how and why it might have spread. These investigations are carried out in order to uncover faults in both the design and installation of fire safety systems and can lead to contractors and building owners being liable to prosecution in both the criminal and civil courts.

Due to the lack of knowledge at compartmentation design stage of the size and types of services that will pass through a fire rated floor or wall, most specifications will consist of an instruction to reinstate the compartment to the recommended fire integrity and insulation, rather than mention specific products. This can potentially lead to incorrect or inferior products being installed.

The installation of fire-stops must be undertaken by a professional, using products appropriate for the situation.

A very good example of a product that is often misused for passive fire stopping purposes is PE ‘fire rated’ foam. Guidance on the packaging will often state that the product is able to achieve up to a four hour fire rating. However, on inspection of the original fire test it can be seen that this type of product will usually be tested in a 15mm gap in a solid wall that is over 200mm thick with no services passing through it. The limited size of the hole restricts the amount of oxygen that can fuel the flame and so the foam is able to withstand the passage of fire for 4 hours. However, if the hole size is increased to 50mm and the wall thickness reduced to 100mm, the foam can burn through in less than 5 minutes.

If a product is specified and installed in line with its 3rd party certified detail, this kind of life threatening mistake can be avoided.

Another pitfall to look out for is the practice of patressing. This is where off-cuts of plasterboard are used to either reduce a hole size prior to fire-stopping the penetration with mastics or in many cases, the plasterboard is cut tight to the services and then glued in place using a fire rated mastic.

The Building Regulations are clear. For a solution to be acceptable, it must be shown by test to work. There are recommendations made by the plasterboard manufacturers on how patressing should be used. These involve fixing the patch back to the studs either side of the opening with plasterboard screws at 300mm centres with the addition of metal cavity fixings being used



FIRE AND PESTS: SOME KEY FACTS

- **Norway rats regularly travel 700-800m per night around the areas they infest such as farms, but they travel smaller distances in urban areas**
- **Norway rats have been found travelling up to 2.5km per night**
- **House mice will easily travel between floors in a house or block of flats**
- **Both rats and mice damage electrical wiring causing fires**
- **Rats and mice are able to gnaw through hard materials such as lead, tin and aluminium.**

around the services.

Even these onerous details have not been proven by test to work and so the Association of Specialist Fire Protection (ASFP) is clear on this matter: patressing is not a recognised way of fire-stopping.

If this all sounds too complicated and risk laden, the ASFP would strongly recommend that life safety packages such as fire-stopping should be sub-contracted to third party certified installers who can not only demonstrate expertise in the installation of these products, but also have their work independently checked by certification bodies accredited by UKAS (United Kingdom Accreditation Service).

Pests

Pest species have the ability to access buildings through the smallest of gaps. Mice for example can push through gaps less than 10mm, so possible access points should be reduced to 5mm as far as practicable to deter rodent intrusions. It is also important to note that rodents must continually gnaw to wear down their incisor teeth which grow throughout their lifetime. The incisor teeth are incredibly strong and allow rodents to gnaw through substances such as wood, cement and brick. This means that rodents can often create their own access points into properties, and when inside, can easily gnaw through unprotected compartmentation as infestations expand and food sources are located.



Rodents gnawing habits also cause concerns regarding fire and flood as they will chew through items such as electrical cabling, water tanks and gas pipes as they attempt to wear their teeth back. Professional pest controllers will minimise the access of rodents around buildings by sealing gaps with products such as wire wool that rodents struggle to gnaw through. Specialist materials designed for rodents are also available to pest controllers to minimise the potential migration of rodents when they gain access to a building.

When refurbishments are being carried out, it may also be worth considering the prevention and control of pest insect species. Flying insects can be prevented from entering premises with the use of fly screens for windows and chain link or plastic curtains for doors, even the use of air curtains which stop flying insects. However, be aware that some insect prevention measures may not be designed for all areas of a building, and proofing measures such as chain link doors may not necessarily be suitable for busy doorways and areas.

The use of electronic fly control units may also be considered during refit, but beware: placing a fly control unit in the wrong location can lead to contamination of product, the attraction of unwanted pests into the property, and potentially a fire risk if the wrong type of unit is located in a dusty or wet environment. As always, when it comes to pest prevention measures, consult a professional pest controller to ensure you are not putting properties and lives at risk by allowing pests easy entry and not comprehensively sealing internal access paths.

Details of suitably qualified fire protection installers can be obtained from the ASFP website at www.asfp.org.uk

Incorrect fitting of an intumescent pipe collar ▼



▲ Incorrect use of intumescent foam



Wilf Butcher is Chief Executive Officer for the Association for Specialist Fire Protection (ASFP). Wilf has been involved in the Fire industry for many years, and writes technical articles on a range of fire-related subjects.

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WEIL'S DISEASE: construction's silent killer

Weil's Disease, or Leptospirosis, is regarded by many in Britain as a 'rare' illness. Whilst this is broadly true, this complacency creates a larger problem.

Those within the construction industry are at a higher risk of contracting this infection and consequently are being misdiagnosed.

The disease can in certain circumstances lead to debilitating illness, even death – the most high profile recent fatality being champion rower Andy Holmes, who it is suspected contracted the disease from a competition on the River Witham in Lincolnshire.

Leptospirosis is an infection caused by bacteria, which are transmitted through water that has been contaminated by animal (especially rodent or cow) urine. For the construction industry work involving sewers and waterways is regarded as a high risk, though any site with standing water and rodent activity may be a cause for



concern. For example, cases have occurred in workers redeveloping city docks for housing or shopping. Everything from a puddle in a cow shed to derelict brownfield sites could be harbouring the disease.

The bacteria (leptospire) pass into the human system primarily through cuts, broken skin or through the eyes or nose. Hence, prevention tactics are centred on creating physical barriers between operatives and contaminated water or soil. At its most basic, this barrier may be good waterproof clothing or suits, and a waterproof plaster to protect cuts.

Further to this, all care should be taken to prevent and discourage rats from entering any area of the site or buildings. Professional pest control methods may be necessary for some projects, but by far the most important action is hygiene and good housekeeping. Workers should not eat outside of designated canteens etc. Scraps, litter and the smell of food can all attract rats from where there were none. Even if there is no evidence of rats, simple hand washing is key. Site welfare facilities must, of course be adequate. Employers may not be able to fully eliminate the risks of contracting the infection. Employees must therefore be aware of symptoms in themselves and their workmates (see box).

BPCA chief executive Simon Forrester said "Leptospirosis is as rare as it is unpleasant for the sufferer. Like pest controllers, construction operatives are often working in sites where rats are present in numbers, and many workers fail to take proper hygiene precautions. It can be as simple as rubbing an eye or smoking a cigarette after touching scaffolding on which a rat has been active the night before. The problem is down to awareness, and we recommend a toolbox talk is given on Weil's Disease as part of the induction on any sites where rat activity has been detected. Your local pest controller will be able to assist."

In the case of a site where the disease is detected, it is suggested that any activity near water sources is ceased until a proper investigation has been carried out. Also, all staff are immediately given a toolbox talk and their PPE is checked for suitability. Any site where Leptospirosis is present must inform the HSE under RIDDOR.

FIVE FACTS

- 1 Prevention is better than cure, and simple PPE will minimise the hazard
- 2 The leptospirosis bacterium cannot survive in seawater
- 3 Symptoms take 3-21 days to appear, and the first stage can take a 'flu-like' appearance, with red eyes, fever, neuralgia and nausea all being common
- 4 Second stage appears after the sufferer appears to recover, and is very serious (renal failure, meningitis, even death) – most people do not go to second stage
- 5 As there are only two to three deaths per year from Weil's Disease in the UK, it is important to ensure medical staff know about an individual's exposure to high-risk areas.

Five ways to stay safe

- 1 Always use protective clothing including waterproof gloves and boots when working in contaminated areas
- 2 Ensure all scratches, cuts and abrasions are disinfected and covered with waterproof dressings before starting work
- 3 Wash hands and arms thoroughly before eating, drinking or smoking, and after finishing work
- 4 If you work in 'danger zones', see your doctor if you develop flu like symptoms such as headache, fever or chill
- 5 For those working in 'danger zones', give regular awareness talks and encourage them to carry the Leptospirosis card (pictured).



In summary...

It is clear a healthy respect for the harm this disease can cause will help keep you and your colleagues safe when working in areas of possible contamination. We suggest you build this into risk assessments when working on farms, near open water sources or on/near sewer systems. Workers and their friends and family must understand the symptoms, and employers have a duty of care to ensure their staff communicate the message effectively, including to their medical professionals.

Further information

HSE Books
INDG 84 Leptospirosis – are you at risk?
www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/indg84.pdf

Leptospirosis cards are available from BPCA.
Call 01332 294 288 or email enquiry@bpca.org.uk

www.nhs.uk/conditions/Leptospirosis

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green pest

Being green means different things to us all. To some it's a monthly trip to the bottle bank, to others it's a zealous commitment to organic vegetables, bicycling and clean energy. Most of us sit somewhere between these two extremes...

Green pest control is similarly ill defined. It can range from a firm claiming to spray less pesticides to one that will use every possible alternative to chemicals including heating, freezing, and deep cleaning. The difference between these approaches is the point at which chemicals are used. At one end of the spectrum chemicals are used at an early stage, at the other they are the very last port of call.

Driven by consumer demand and EU legislation there has in the past 20 years been a significant shift towards green pest practices both in the UK and across Europe. The introduction of the EU Biocidal Product Directive in 1998 was a defining moment in requiring the pesticide industry to find alternatives to harmful chemicals.

Thirteen years on and the Biocidal Product Directive is working its way through the EU Commission, further restricting the types of chemicals on the market and the concentrations in which they can be used. This, along with the new Sustainable Use of Pesticides Directive, requiring the UK Government to introduce a national action plan to reduce pesticide usage by next year, are driving green practices in the pest control industry.

Different EU countries have adopted different approaches to chemical misuse. Germany and some of its Scandinavian neighbours have opted for national controls, either through usage constraints or, as in Germany's case, legislation controlling who is allowed to operate as a pest practitioner. The UK has adopted a more free-market approach.

One of the drivers for change in the UK has been the growing demand for green practices from customers. Pest control is no different from any other industry whose clients want to feel they are making good environmental choices and who often need to prove corporate social responsibility.

While legislative controls exist on the misuse of pesticides, the UK pest control industry practices self-regulation. The result has been a broad spectrum of practices, from the unskilled and liberal spraying of insecticides to the use of best practice to ensure minimal environmental impact. The problem for the green-conscious consumer is understanding which end of the spectrum they are buying their services from. Looking for a BPCA logo is a first step to managing this process.

BPCA's members practice Integrated Pest Management (IPM), which is a sustainable approach to managing pests by combining biological, cultural, physical and chemical tools in a way that minimises economic, health, and environmental risks. IPM has been around for thousands of years, and started when man first became an agrarian society. It protects people and food as well as the environment.

“Pest control is no different from any other industry whose clients want to feel they are making good environmental choices and who often need to prove corporate social responsibility.”

control

BPCA members use the minimum of biocides wherever possible, using other means to limit the pest population through their understanding of the biology and habits of pest species. Professional pest controllers practising IPM will:

- Thoroughly assess the infestation before treatment begins, including coordination with the customer
- Have extensive knowledge of the pest species and the conditions under which they thrive
- Have expert knowledge in the selection and application of biocides and other non-chemical control methods, in particular biological and mechanical controls
- Know when best to revisit the infected area to adapt and maximise efficiency.

IPM emphasises control not eradication, and is both an extremely efficient method while also being more environmentally friendly.

The first line of defence for any company using this principal is to physically prevent pests entering the building through proofing. If your workplace, factory or home is overrun with mice or rats, rodenticide use will most likely be your only option. Green pest control is about ensuring you are not forced into chemical usage and that if you have a pest problem it is on a small enough scale that you still have environmentally sensitive options.

Preventing access is not just about proofing. Dr Mike Ayers has practised integrated pest management for many years and is the managing director of Precision Pest Management. “Management and quality procedures are important to keeping things out as well,” explains Dr Ayers. “Doors may be left open, pests can fly in, they can be carried in on your goods and materials so your quality department should really be vetting your suppliers to make sure they are not sending pests in on goods, which is the most common way for them to be transported around the country. We also have examples of pests entering firms in second-hand machinery.”

The next phase in integrated pest management is to positively identify the pest and ensure that if pests get in they cannot survive. They must be deprived of food and water sources, harbourage, places to hide and if possible be in a cool and well-aired environment. Reputable pest control companies will advise on cleaning regimes and how to eliminate food sources before reaching the final stage of the process, which is extermination. It is at this point that the greatest variety in approach to green pest management exists.

Some companies will use every non-toxic method in their armory before resorting to chemical usage. They may use localised heat treatment raising the temperature to 52°C and so killing all stages of insect life or freezing with CO₂ powder which kills on contact and has no wet phase as the powder turns straight to gas.

Other non-toxic methods at the disposal of the pest controller include hot air fumigation, use of dessicant dusts as an alternative to insecticidal powders, and deep cleaning. In the case of rodents, there are various traps available that can control infestations.

When chemicals become the last resort, IPM calls for their use at lowest possible concentrations and in the most targeted method possible. Baiting for cockroaches, which then carry the bait in their bodies for other cockroaches to consume is far preferable to spraying. Similarly, monitoring pest movement to place pesticides where there is most activity significantly reduces chemical usage – ie. the sniper approach rather than the shotgun.

One significant issue to note: IPM will not work without the active involvement of both the pest control contractor and the client. If the client carries out the relevant cleaning, proofing and other measures, control of infestation is established faster, more efficiently and with less risk. BPCA technical manager Richard Moseley said “In my experience the main reason for failure in controlling an infestation is lack of client awareness of their responsibilities. Many building owners assume they simply hire a contractor to deal with the problem, but change must come from within as well.”

/continued over...

But as managing director of Check Services Lewis Jenkins points out, using these methods can sometimes be costly. They are often more labour intensive and require specialist knowledge. The green approach can come at a price.

“Customers may ask for a green approach to pest control but not fully understand the consequences. They may like the concept of being green (it may even win them extra business), but they can forget that it may come with additional costs.” explains Mr Jenkins whose company specialises in using integrated pest management techniques in the food manufacturing sector.

The food sector is an example of how industry can successfully self regulate. The UK’s major supermarkets have to ensure brand confidence and so impose the most exacting standards on their suppliers to ensure food safety and that includes pest management.

“We are being audited continually on our sites by the supermarket chains,” points out Mr Jenkins. “Their specifications focus on many areas, but food safety underpins much of it. Technicians must be competent to use pesticides and our in-depth training, combined with membership of the BPCA helps provide evidence of this to our customers.”

The supermarkets demand integrated pest management from their suppliers to ensure the safety of their produce. But should a problem arise public health will always trump green practices and the most effective methods available will be used to ensure food safety.

One area where change is likely is the use of rodenticides as a preventative method of pest control rather than to deal with an infestation. Of particular concern is preventative perimeter baiting.

The Campaign for Responsible Rodenticide Use (CRRU) is an industry-led lobbying group for responsible chemical usage to reduce potential harm to wildlife. Recent research has found that 80 per cent of barn owls carry rodenticide residues, suggesting they are at some point eating contaminated rodents.

“We don’t think birds like barn owls and kestrels are contaminated by eating the target rats and mice because they form only a very small part of their diet. It’s the non-target small rodents like field mice and voles that are becoming contaminated from, among other things, perimeter baits,” explains CRRU chairman Dr Alan Buckle. “The evidence seems to suggest that wild small mammals are getting into the bait boxes, often well before the rats do. So routine preventative perimeter baiting should be avoided where there is no obvious threat of rodent invasion.” Richard Moseley goes on to point out “Where preventative baiting is used, it should be carried out after a suitable assessment showing rodent infestation is a constant threat, or should be done with a non toxic formulation that can be replaced with rodenticide when activity becomes apparent.”

Ultimately the most effective form of green pest control is when it is designed into a building at the architectural, planning and construction phases. When Britain won the right to host the 2012

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Earthenware drainage has been used below ground rather than plastic which is vulnerable to rats gnawing, a key issue on the Olympic site which is built over one of London's main Victorian sewers.

Olympics in July 2005 it was decided that one of the guiding principles of the games would be providing a lasting legacy.

With the Olympic park in Stratford being built from scratch on a former Victorian landfill site, the Olympic organisers saw an opportunity to leave just such a legacy for the construction and pest control industries that would ultimately mean less chemical usage.

Working with the Chartered Institute of Environmental Health the Olympic Delivery Authority called on architects and designers working on the Olympic park to design pests out of their venues. The result was the publication of the CIEH guidance, Pest Minimisation Best Practice for the Construction Industry, outlining the best practice expected by the ODA from its contractors.

The principles of integrated pest management were at the heart of the project. Architects and designers were asked to minimise points of access and harbourage as well as making the buildings easy for cleaning, sanitation and pest inspection.

Earthenware drainage has been used below ground rather than plastic which is vulnerable to rats gnawing, a key issue on the Olympic site which is built over one of London's main Victorian sewers. Earthenware rat barrier drainage fittings have also been used to prevent access from sewers.

Cracks and crevices in floors and ceilings have been avoided or sealed. Utility pipes and wiring are tightly sealed when passing through walls while all external structures are designed to avoid pest harbourage. Birds are prevented from roosting on flat surfaces like window ledges, roofs and roof edges using spikes, netting, electronic strips and noise-makers; with each building designed to cope with effective waste management, including recycling. Ground-hugging thorny plants are being used in landscaping, making life uncomfortable for rodents.

One country that has been leading the way in the area of green pest control is Germany. Since the early 90s Germany has adopted strict legal controls on who can practice pest control with all practitioners having to train for three years and pass exams before they can practice. If pest controllers take and pass additional annual exams they can then advertise themselves as green. All practicing German pest controllers must use integrated pest management.

"Everyone who has learnt the job is a green pest controller because we are forced by law to challenge our methods and our biocide use and we have to use the lowest hazardous biocides and best methods

which is enforceable by law," explains Rainer Gsell general manager of DSV, the German equivalent of BPCA.

Like the UK one of the drivers for change in Germany was demand from clients but unlike the UK it is far easier for customers to be sure of what they are buying. "Being a green pest controller is a big marketing instrument in Germany," explains Mr Gsell. "The idea of being green is very big here and if you advertise as a green pest controller then you have to be one, which is why we have the certification."

It is a model that the UK industry, led by BPCA, has been looking at to help weed out bad practices in the industry and to make it clearer to customers who they can trust and to exactly what level of green pest control they are actually signing up. But until tighter controls are introduced, customers are recommended to insist on IPM to minimise risk and stay as green as possible.



Stuart Spear, a freelance journalist who has specialised in environmental and public health for 15 years, was editor of the official magazine of the Chartered Institute of Environmental Health for seven years. He has recently researched wellbeing for the Department of Health and contributed to many books on wellbeing and public health.

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Bridging a gap in current thinking



The case for introducing preservation and pest control measures in buildings from the outset

It's not a thought often considered by those working in the architectural and construction professions, but they can play a key role in keeping buildings free from pests, damp, and insect infestation – with measures introduced on the drawing board and out on the building site for maximum effect.

Supported by a programme of maintenance after the handover stage, the end result is a comfortable, healthy environment for the long term.

In this article, trade bodies the British Pest Control Association (BPCA) and the Property Care Association (PCA) have joined forces to highlight ways to preserve and protect properties in the UK – and help keep out any unwanted guests.

Hidden issues in sustainable construction

Modular, off-site building methods are being warmly welcomed by many in the construction sector, who recognise the sustainability benefits and fast-track nature of the process. However, one area which should be carefully considered by specifiers are the pallets and packaging the modular products are transported in, from exporting countries.

Species including the Pine Wood Nematode (a microscopic worm-like pest spread by a wood-boring beetle known as the Sawyer Beetle) and the Asian Longhorn Beetle can be transported into the UK via this route – and ultimately they can impact severely on the UK countryside and urban areas.

Both of these pests can prove detrimental to our forests and urban street trees and, if significant numbers take hold, wooded

areas and avenues of trees would need to be felled to control spread.

It is an EU requirement that all wooden packaging and pallets imported to member states from third countries (or from Portugal, which has an outbreak of Pine Wood Nematode) have been treated by an ISPM 15 approved measure, so that this risk is removed.

According to the BPCA, peace of mind is assured by ensuring wood pallets and packaging are treated and marked to the International Standards For Phytosanitary Measures No 15, (ISPM 15).

David Hammond, managing director of Thermokil Ltd, runs the BPCA's courses on heat treatment for insect control. He said: "Packaging and pallets can be produced from inferior wood including deadwood, which is more likely to be infested, as it may have been allowed to stand around for a period of time."

Anyone with concerns in this matter should contact the BPCA, or the Forestry Commission, for advice and guidance on the subject.

Tackling the condensation season

As well as the use of greener materials in construction, the quest for a more sustainable building industry – and a long-term reduction in energy bills – means more efficient homes and properties.

However, these 'greener' properties can harbour an emerging problem that construction managers and project managers might in the future need to help address – namely the issue of poor ventilation causing mould, damp and condensation.

This is a timely concern – as the beginning of winter usually heralds the start of the 'condensation season.'

Day-to-day activities

Atmospheric moisture is created by occupation including respiration, industrial activities, washing/bathing/laundry, and cooking.

Steve Hodgson, general manager of the PCA, said: “With all these activities representing normal day-to-day activities, the creation of atmospheric water is natural and must be expected.

“When a building leaks air, the damp air within the building can move out and is diluted with air moving into the building from outside to replace it. This dilution of the damp air within a building reduces the relative humidity levels within the occupied space and decreases the likelihood of dampness, condensation and mould growth.

“To meet the needs for more energy efficient homes, when doors and windows and loft hatches are draught-proofed, walls are insulated, floors are covered in laminates and flues sealed, the rate of natural air exchange is dramatically reduced.”

Double trouble

Simon Forrester, BPCA chief executive, says such conditions are not just ripe for cultivating damp and mould. “From a pest control point of view, an elevated moisture content level within a building, particularly kitchens and bathrooms provides a good climate for pests. This can include psocids and book lice, as well as roaches – especially the German cockroach, which thrives in this type of environment.”

“Moisture is absolutely essential to the growth and development of many public health insects. By reducing this through effective ventilation, air management, good design and effective building maintenance, the chance of such pest infestation is considerably reduced. Furthermore, reduced relative humidity also helps reduce the incidence of house mites, which in turn will help asthma sufferers.”

Addressing the problem

Steve Hodgson believes that, in the future, there will have to be a balance between the economic reality of powered and passive ventilation, with the need to conserve heat and fuel.

Managing the characteristics of new build and refurbished buildings that are better insulated and increasingly air tight with the expectations of the occupiers will also need to be addressed.

Steve said: “Solutions are available, but one size does not fit all. For construction and project managers the installation of vapour check layers within the

fabric of the building is an idea for consideration, but the whole subject needs to be researched and considered overall.”

Onsite action

Construction managers can also, at the earliest stage of a building project, take steps to minimise pest problems for the longer term. While much thought is given to community and environmental aspects on building sites, BPCA urges contractors to think about another perspective – pest infestations.

Simon Forrester said: “One of the biggest issues on a construction site is the opportunities packaging and materials present for harbourage. Rats burrow and make their nests under shelter such as timber stacks, piles of rubbish and untended vegetation, and when the builders move out the rats don’t move too – they’ll look to the new residents as a continuing source of food.

“We’ve had reports of rats infesting entire new developments, which does not leave a great impression for the new occupants.”

Action at the design stage

Richard Moseley is the technical manager at BPCA. He believes that ideally at the design stage, architects, house builders and design & build contractors would consider consulting a BPCA member, as they can give advice on any problems likely to be encountered early on, following a detailed site investigation, and make recommendations on proofing and site maintenance measures.

Richard said: “One of the major areas of our work is to prevent birds entering a building. We can advise on suitable action at the building design stage on works such as the proofing-off of nesting sites using netting. It’s much easier to put these measures in place at the design stage, knowing the scaffolding is in place and the work can be carried out under the control of the main contractor.

“Another area of significance in the design stage is taking action on the spread of

mosquitoes. We are seeing mosquitoes laying their larvae in standing water in the UK and the ground conditions on a building site can present a great opportunity for this activity.

“The warmer, damper seasons seem to be leading to an increase in the mosquito population. Traditionally we have approximately three dozen varieties in the UK. It appears however, that varieties such as the Tiger Mosquito are moving into Western Europe. As these mosquitoes are vectors for disease, anything that can be done to control their spread is important.”

/continued over...

“From a pest control point of view, an elevated moisture content level within a building, particularly kitchens and bathrooms provides a good climate for pests.”



“One of the major areas of our work is to prevent birds entering a building.”



According to BPCA, other factors to consider at the design stage include placing a fine mesh over air bricks to prevent pests like rodents entering a building, and addressing the issue of voids where a ducted heating system is specified, for example in a multi-occupancy development, as these areas can provide a route for rats and mice to access the entire structure, making subsequent control very difficult and expensive.

Careful attention should also be paid to gaps in skirting boards in properties such as hotels, as bed bugs thrive by resting in these areas, and then crawling across to beds to target sleeping people as their food source.

Finally drains and sewers should be specified with hinged plates, not only to help address any potential flooding issues, but to stop rats entering properties via this route. Rats can even enter a property through a toilet if not properly maintained.

Moseley added: “Public health issues are not generally considered by constructors and designers as being within their remit, but there is such a lot they can do to control and manage pest problems. It adds such a lot to a property when they do, and also prevents potential sale problems later on.”

Maintenance matters

After the design and construction phase, both trade bodies see building maintenance as a critical factor in halting problems, not only in residential environments but commercial, retail and industrial areas too.

This year, the PCA appealed to property owners to call in experts after unearthing evidence that badly installed cavity wall insulation can have a damaging effect on buildings. The move came after the PCA saw a rise in calls from the public, who have found that dampness and decay has created the potential for structural damage to their properties.

Steve Hodgson said: “We have had an increasing number of complaints about timber decay and dampness in homes following the installation of cavity wall insulation.

“We compiled a checklist of faults for the public and property managers to look out for as part of their maintenance programme, and we urge people to be vigilant as ultimately the issue can cause the corrosion of wall ties.”

BPCA has also reported a significant increase in 2011 of a perennial problem – wasps. This year was a bumper year for the stinging pests – with figures showing it to be the worst on record for a decade.

Again, maintenance can help address the issue, with particular attention paid to sealing gaps between soffits and walls, offering an effective method of preventing wasps nests being built in roof spaces, a major source of habitat for the pests this summer.

Flash points

Both trade bodies report flash point areas, where property problems and pests can thrive if maintenance actions are not taken.

This includes drains, which should remain clear of leaves and other debris to enable water to escape from a building quickly, particularly during heavy downpours. Such activity will help prevent water taking an alternative route, potentially into the internal area of a property, which can eventually lead to damp problems.

From a pest control point of view, as described above, hinged plates on drains and high risers can also help stop rats and mice entering a building. Roofs should also have their lead-work and roof tiling checked, as any loose or worn areas can soon become exposed, allowing water to find its way in, as well as wasps and masonry bees and even squirrels.

Finally, gutters should be free from moss, leaves and other debris – and all properly connected up – to give water a fast exit from the building and prevent the entry of pests.

REMEMBER!In-depth
pest control
company
directory
from page 31

Take the right advice

As long-established UK trade bodies, the BPCA and PCA (formerly the BWPDA) have both built up a wealth of experience in their relevant sectors.

With regular training programmes, expert technical panels and carefully selected members, both associations can offer property professionals peace of mind in the service they will receive.



More about the BPCA and its pest control expertise can be found at www.bpca.org.uk or by calling 01332 294 288.

The Property Care Association – which represents the damp control, timber infestation, flood recovery, basement waterproofing, structural repair and condensation industries - can be found online at www.property-care.org or contacted on 0844 375 4301.



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.



Steve Hodgson is general manager of the Property Care Association (PCA). Noted for its training and technical expertise, the PCA represents the UK's structural waterproofing, wood preservation, damp-proofing, flood remediation and structural repair sectors. Steve has extensive experience of the building preservation industry. He recently completed a second series as a resident expert on Channel 4's 'Help My House Is Falling Down'.



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Ground control: common pests around buildings

Pest species often live within the grounds of a building, but some cannot be touched legally, or specific rules apply to their control. Richard Moseley and Kevin Higgins explain.

In bygone times praying was probably the only way many people could be protected from 'beasties'. Things have moved on considerably, and now there is a well-established network of pest management and property professionals to help protect your premises from the pests that seek to share it. There is also a plethora of legislation to ensure that we deal with pests in the prescribed manner. It is very easy for the unwary to fall foul of current legislation; often specialist surveys, reports and licences are required before work can be undertaken, and heavy fines face those who do not conform.

If an animal is detrimental to man's environment, it can be considered a pest. However, this zone can vary dramatically, especially when we think outside our workplaces and homes, and consider the grounds around our properties. Foliage and plants offer quiet, secluded harbourage for animals, sheltered from weather and predators. They often provide rich pickings for unwanted guests, causing headaches for pest controllers and property owners alike.

Some animals that establish themselves close to man will be protected species over which we have little control, such as badgers and water voles. One species that can become a major headache for property owners is bats, which don't only live in attics; they can roost in very small building cavities. Strict regulations surround bats; they and their roosts are legally protected by domestic and international legislation. You must take professional advice and obtain the relevant licence before initiating any environmental changes that might disturb their habitat.

Some species, such as the common brown rat, are recognised pests, and can be dealt with effectively and efficiently by professional pest controllers without any specific action from the property owner. Other species are less closely protected, but their control can only be carried out in certain proscribed ways, such as the Red Fox (*Vulpes vulpes*), which is protected under the terms of legislation such as the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981.

Foxes are opportunists, whose activity is maximised by the fact that many people see them not as a

pest, but a welcome visitor. As wild animals such as foxes are attracted closer to our properties, some form of conflict with man becomes almost inevitable. Steve Wilkinson of Suddenstrike Wildlife Solutions has a lifetime's experience in solving such problems, and is involved in the control of wildlife from mink, rabbits and deer on large estates to squirrels and moles at domestic properties. He says "as our population and urbanisation expands, the habitats of wildlife get smaller, and pressure to expand into human-occupation increases. Sometimes the solution is as simple as to modify the wildlife habitat and the species will move away."

A major factor of his work is the humaneness with which wildlife is treated and a full understanding of the law and legislation that surrounds it. Steve has created bespoke solutions, including making specialist traps and equipment to help control wildlife, one of which includes the removal of Canada Geese from a major sporting location in the UK. Another includes fox traps that he designed and built over 25 years ago. These traps are still successfully catching foxes today, enabling nuisance animals to be removed, without harm, from major urban areas.

Members of the public will often attract unwanted guests to the workplace or home through poor hygiene or feeding animals. This should be discouraged and people should be educated in the risks created by offering animals food and harbourage. Foxes may look attractive in an urban setting, but they sometimes carry diseases

such as mange that can be passed on to domestic pets. They will also ransack waste areas in search of food, leading to further pest infestations of rodents and flies.

"From ghoulies and ghosties
and long-leggedy beasties,
And things that go bump in the night,
Good Lord, deliver us!"

Squirrels also may seem entertaining as they swing from bird feeders, taking seeds and nuts, but infestations can be devastating. Their gnawing habits have been responsible for numerous fires and electrocutions as they chew through exposed wires in loft spaces.

By attracting wild animals people will often condemn them, as control measures may be required when the area becomes overrun with pest species. Because of the various pitfalls that people can fall into when dealing with pests and animals in external areas, it is vital that site managers and owners use the knowledge and expertise of a professional pest controller. Property owners should ensure their contractor understands their responsibilities under the relevant legislation; if there was a court case, the prosecution may ask whether due diligence had been carried out.

Andy Law, of Andy Law Pest Control in Perth tells us that Grey Squirrels are classed by most pest controllers as vermin. "Call a pest controller the minute you think they have moved into your home, as squirrels are incredibly destructive. They are usually tempted into gardens by bird feeders. Once they realise there is food in a house, they will scale walls and do anything they can to break into your home. They will build nests and before you know it, you will have a whole family living beneath your floorboards or in your walls." Andy points out "please note that our protected and much-loved native Red Squirrels are shy and will not move into your property."

There are a number of well-documented cases of members of the public misusing pesticides to try to control rodent activity, such as placing rodent bait near pet bowls as this is where they are feeding. Such placement of pesticide is completely illegal, and it would never have occurred if a trained operator had been used.

A number of rodenticides are restricted to indoor use because they are potent products that could easily be picked up by non-target species and ingested via secondary poisoning. Pest controllers will always thoroughly assess a situation prior to applying pesticides, and will use the safest product in the safest way, at minimum quantities.

As with most situations in life, prevention is always better than cure. All property owners and managers should consider a pest control contract to help prevent pest intrusion or flag early pest activity. But be warned, a pest control contract is a partnership between the contractor and the pest controller. If you are warned about issues such as foliage that may offer rodents harbourage nearby, external waste that may provide nesting materials, or food residues that will attract foxes or birds, then act on the recommendations. These have been made to protect the site, and you ignore them at your peril.

When dealing with birds on buildings, it is important to deny them access and places to nest. Lee Brodie of southern-based Discreet Pest Control reports that "long-term results require the best quality products to be applied. Prevention may also include some more unusual methods of control than the removal of rubbish and waste. Birds of prey for example can be used to prevent bird species accessing sites and nesting upon them. Traditionally, hawks can be used to scare birds such as pigeons away from roosting sites, or to discourage gulls from feeding on waste tips."

It should be remembered that all wild birds in the British Isles are protected species, but some are listed in what is known as the General Licence, issued by the Government. This licence states which species are classed as pests, and can therefore be dealt with e.g. pigeons.

If you are planning any renovations or new build on a site, it may be worth finding out if you have any ground-nesting birds on your property. If so, and they are species that are not on the General Licence, you may have to wait until nesting is complete for the year before you commence construction. This is an area in which John Dowling of John Dowling Falconry Ltd in Gloucester has had experience. "We have done a number of ground nesting bird deterrent contracts. Species like Skylark and Lapwing that nest in areas planned for development can delay works and potentially cost thousands in penalties and lost revenues."

Pest activity is a serious issue at any time. The movement of pests and wild animals in external areas may not seem as serious as a heavy infestation within the property.

However, as we have seen, our surrounding areas are the stepping stones into our properties, and if we are to prevent pest problems within the fabric of our buildings, we need to start our pest prevention measures at the property boundaries. By controlling issues such as foliage growth, food spillage and storage, we can manipulate the grounds around our properties to make them unwelcoming for pest species. Complement this with a suitable pest prevention contract from a BPCA member, and you will massively reduce the risk of pests and wild animals in your external areas.

For details of professional pest controllers, see the BPCA directory starting on page 31.

www.andylawpestcontrol.co.uk

www.discreetpestcontrol.com

www.suddenstrike.co.uk



Richard Moseley is BPCA's technical manager and joined the association in 2008. His breadth of knowledge and enthusiasm for the pest management industry, which he has been part of for over 13 years, is evident in all aspects of his work. He is already a regular contributor to magazines in sectors purchasing pest control services, and provides technical support and advice regarding contract specification and pest control solutions. richard@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

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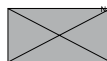
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INSURING AGAINST PEST DAMAGE

Karl King, managing director of Bridge Insurance explains the risks associated with inadequate insurance and pest damage.

In the first issue of **alexo** we looked briefly at what a business owner or manager needs to consider in determining the adequacy of a pest control contractor's insurance and risk management programme in order to protect the assets, income and integrity of their business.

In this issue, we look to explore some of the key considerations and provide property owners and business managers with a clear understanding of what they should be looking for from their contractors – and more importantly, why.

The good news is that BPCA members are aware of their insurance and risk management responsibilities and that BPCA continues to work with its members in order to ensure compliance and understanding surrounding this issue. BPCA members are required to hold a minimum level of insurances, and many exceed that.

The bad news is that not all specialist contractors are as well advised or represented by their trade association, leaving much more scope for deficiencies within their insurance programme, especially in this difficult economic climate.

Before we even look at insurance, let's explore some of the key health and safety and risk management responsibilities of a property owner employing contractors, whether pest controllers or otherwise.

Control

A lack of control of contractors can lead to accidents and injuries not only to the contractors' employees but to your own employees, tenants, residents and visitors. Accidents may result in civil claims for compensation and statutory proceedings against property owners and their managing agents.

Legal duties

Those who employ contractors need to fully appreciate the extent of their legal duty towards their contractor. The legal situation is spelled out in the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974 (section 3) which requires employers (and the self-employed) to ensure that:

- Their activities do not endanger persons not in their employ
- Information is given concerning potential health and safety hazards.



Section 4 places duties on occupiers and/or owners of premises to ensure that:

- The premises, plant and substances contained in them are safe and without risks to health
- Reasonable measures are taken to provide safe access.

In short, you must ensure that your contractor is not at risk from your business and your contractor must ensure that you, your employees, tenants, residents and visitors are not at risk from their activities.

Other more detailed legal requirements are contained in The Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999, The Occupiers Liability Act 1984 and the Workplace Regulations 1992.

Selection of contractors

The term 'contractor' does not just refer to building contractors. In its widest sense it includes any individual or company who enters premises to fulfil a contractual obligation between the property owner or their managing agent and a third party company.

Likely contractors could include:

- Pest control technicians
- Telephone engineers
- Window cleaners
- Contract cleaners
- Plumbers
- Electrical/mechanical maintenance engineers
e.g. lift engineers
- Grounds maintenance/gardeners.

When selecting contractors, health and safety aspects must be taken into account as well as their ability or competence to complete the work. Many organisations have a policy of only using contractors from an 'approved list' of firms whose capability, quality and health and safety performance are already known. The selection procedure should also include a check that the contractor has adequate employers' liability and public liability insurance cover, which we refer to specifically later in this article. BPCA members are often listed on the CHAS (Contractors Health & Safety Assessment Scheme) database, and are both assessed on joining BPCA and also at regular points thereafter. The CHAS scheme has mutual recognition with many other industry schemes, so membership of one will equal the others through the Safety Schemes in Procurement (SSIP) Programme.

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Five key measures to reduce risk

- 1 Make a list of contractors who work on or around your premises, and check that their insurances are sufficient for the task in hand
- 2 Consider selecting contractors only from approved lists such as members of a health and safety scheme or recognised trade associations
- 3 If in doubt talk to a professional insurance advisor

4 Check your insurances to see if a Contractor Insurance Warranty is in place, and what it means to your business

5 Keep detailed records: ensure your contractors provide a proper written risk assessment, and consider providing training or induction to contractors if your premises contains special features or hazards.

REMEMBER!

In-depth pest control company directory from page 31

Planning

Many accidents involving contractors have happened because of a failure to plan the job properly i.e. to take account of health and safety aspects which are likely to arise. A risk assessment needs to be made and communicated to all involved. For high-risk operations such as working at height, the contractor should be asked to prepare and then work to a written method statement. BPCA members are provided with templates of these documents and will be able to provide them to their customers.

Clear responsibilities

The work to be done, the areas in which the contractors can operate, together with what can and cannot be done, should be clearly defined. This is normally done in the form of 'Site Rules for Contractors', usually printed as a leaflet. This should be kept as simple and 'user friendly' as possible and it is essential that the contractors on site actually doing the work are aware of the contents. Getting signed receipts on issue of these leaflets is strongly recommended.

Training

Even if they are fully competent specialists, contractors will still need some training or induction if they are to appreciate any special features and hazards they may come across whilst working at your premises. Individual records of training/induction given should be kept.

Monitoring of contractors

The client or employer, that is the property owner or their managing agent, is responsible for monitoring the health and safety performance of the contractor as the work progresses. The level of monitoring will be dictated by the nature and location of the work, but performance can be monitored by:

- The continual vigilance of all staff, so as to ensure all hazards are promptly reported and rectified
- Routine inspection as the work progresses.

Insurance requirements

The purpose of the above advice is to minimise and, where possible, avoid the potential for an accident or negligent act by the contractor which could lead to a resultant claim for personal injury, damage to property or long-term financial loss to the business. Usually in these circumstances the property owner will initially look to its own insurers for comfort. However, please be aware that it is common for UK commercial insurance policies to include a 'Contractor Insurance Warranty'. This condition of the policy places an onus on the policy holder to ensure 'contractors' working on your premises have adequate levels of insurance in order that your insurers will be able to pursue their rights of subrogation against the contractor's insurer should they so wish.

Sometimes, these warranties can be very specific as to what is required, but equally they can sometimes be quite vague. However, all require you to obtain proof that the contractor is adequately insured from the outset, so please take time to understand any minimum requirements of your insurance policy before appointing a contractor. A simple contractor questionnaire during the tender process is an efficient and easy way of obtaining this information.

What levels of cover are adequate? Our advice here is simple. As no risk is ever the same, we would always recommend that you take advice from an experienced insurance broker, who will assist you in making this decision, taking into account all of the facts such as the methods of work and values of the property being worked upon in addition to any minimum requirements of your insurance programme.

www.bridgeinsurance.co.uk

www.ssip.org.uk

www.hse.gov.uk



Karl King is head of operations at Bridge Insurance Brokers London Ltd, a leading broker to the construction market. Karl has worked in insurance for over 20 years, providing client-focused solutions to a range of clients including the National Specialist Contractors Council and its members.

Invasion of the super-ant!

Ants believed to have a 'kamikaze attraction' to electricity have been discovered in one of England's finest National Trust gardens. Colonies of *Lasius neglectus*, known as the Asian super ant, have been found at Hidcote Manor, near Chipping Campden in Gloucestershire. Though previously spotted in mainland Europe for over 20 years, this is the first recorded sighting in the UK. They are naturally drawn to electrical currents so can pose a fire risk. The Trust estimates there were almost 35,000 ants found in one shorted electrical junction box based on the weight of the dead ants.

The ants look like a common black garden variety, but are present in much greater numbers. Like the American fire ant, *Lasius neglectus* ants are attracted to electricity as the current makes them produce a pheromone which attracts other ants, and then set up large colonies in and around electrical wiring. They became a serious

problem in Texas, causing traffic light failures across the state.

The queens can breed with males from their own nest quickly and set up self-sufficient nests even when separated from the main colony. Supercolonies can be up to 100 times larger than normal garden ant nests, sometimes extending over a hectare.

Hidcote Manor experienced both electrical problems and also reports of buildings being overcome by plagues of ants. The insects are not a threat to us as they don't bite people or pets. However, their colony structure poses a menace to native species by out-competing them for food and space, and their attraction to electrical circuitry means they could pose a fire risk by shorting out wiring.

Brian Ridout, English Heritage entomologist and architectural conservator, said "It is thought they came in on pot plants from Eastern Europe. Since the first confirmed sighting in 2009, there have been other

examples in the UK."

Alan Morris from Bayer CropScience said "The National Trust had experienced real problems achieving control of the ants using traditional methods, so they asked Bayer to carry out a four-week scientific trial on a new delivery system. By the end of the month, we had achieved an 80% reduction in ant numbers, and handed the research over to the Trust's pest control contractors Mitie, who used an integrated pest management approach to control aphids on nearby Lime trees, the ants' food source." While the ants have not been eradicated, the earlier problems of electrical short-circuits have ceased, and the buildings are no longer overrun with this nuisance pest.

Anyone who suspects they have an infestation of the Asian super ant should contact the environmental health department within their local authority.

www.pestcontrol-expert.com

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- What criteria did you use to select your servicing company?**
- Are you convinced it will protect your business?**

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