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in the food  
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Editor Simon Forrester  
[editor@alexo.org.uk](mailto:editor@alexo.org.uk)

Editorial team Laurence Barnard,  
Simon Forrester, Kevin  
Higgins, Richard Moseley,  
Stuart Spear

Advertising Laurence Barnard  
[laurence@alexo.org.uk](mailto:laurence@alexo.org.uk)

Design and production by Davidson IGD  
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Telephone 01332 294 288  
Email [enquiry@bPCA.org.uk](mailto:enquiry@bPCA.org.uk)  
Website [www.bPCA.org.uk](http://www.bPCA.org.uk)



This summer's downpours coupled with cooler temperatures across the UK have meant the nation's biggest pest controller is not a global servicing company – but Mother Nature!

“The recent wet weather has had a huge effect on wasp numbers, with some members reporting massive reductions in call-outs” states Richard Moseley of BPCA. “The other side of this coin has been the rapid increase in call outs for rats, which have been driven out of the sewers to seek harbourage away from flooding. We’ve also seen an increase in domestic pet fleas, which may be linked to both temperature and resistance to some of the commonly-used treatments.”

So the decrease in wasps may be scant consolation for the hospitality industry, hit by the damp weather and a decidedly flat Olympic boost. Spare a thought for pest controllers, many of whom normally take on additional seasonal staff during the Summer to cope with the influx of wasp callouts.

Justin Holloway of Prokill in Swindon said “As this year’s season draws to a close we have recorded around a 90% decrease in call outs for wasps when compared to 2011. A small surge occurred in the closing weeks of September but nothing that is going to change the overall picture. The impact of this summer on future numbers of wasps, bees and other garden pollinators is yet to be seen.”

## Bed bug Olympics a non-starter

Despite the fears of many in the hospitality sector, the so-called ‘bed bug Olympics’ didn’t materialise, with no significant increase in this tricky pest noted over the Summer.

Clive Boase, Principal Consultant at the Pest Management Consultancy, works closely with the hospitality industry on bed bug issues. “The London 2012 Olympics were of course a very big event for the hospitality industry. The whole sector worked hard to ensure that visitors would have a pleasant and bug-free experience, and their preparations paid off. In addition, there were concerns from some quarters that the event may result in an influx of bed bugs into the capital. However early indications are that these concerns were unfounded, and infestations (like visitor numbers) were down on the previous year. However, the post-Olympics infestation status is being monitored very closely.”

BPCA Chief Executive Simon Forrester spoke about bed bugs at the recent PestWorld Conference in Boston, USA. He said “the topic is huge in the States right now, and there are some very innovative products



available for the monitoring and control of this persistent pest.” He also warned “There’s a lot of ‘snake oil salesmen’ hoping to cash in on this wave of public concern, by selling unproven technologies to a broadly uninformed audience. We’d always advise you seek the advice of a professional pest management company as bed bugs are an extremely difficult pest to eradicate.”

Dr Richard Naylor from **BED BUG FOUNDATION** charity The Bed Bug Foundation commented “though bed bugs are often linked to global travel, the hard work put in by the London Games organisers and Local Authorities meant the spectre of negative press didn’t materialise. The European pest industry isn’t resting on its laurels though, and preparations are afoot to launch a pan-European code of practice on Bed Bug management – the first of its kind. [www.bedbugfoundation.org](http://www.bedbugfoundation.org)

## Royal Shield



Shield Pest Control has been awarded a three-year extension to its contract for the Royal households. Shield was granted a Royal Warrant in 2008 for services across Buckingham, St. James and Kensington palaces.

Managing Director Dan Steward said, “We’ve always been proud of our Royal Appointment and are delighted to have our contract extended for a further three years.

Winning business is one thing – retaining it over time is equally important. This represents an endorsement of our dedicated team and their ability to consistently carry out their work to high standards.”

The contract is for complete preventative pest control across all areas of the households, both inside and out.

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

## Badger cull pause

Following the campaign challenging the proposed cull of badgers designed to help stop Bovine TB, Natural England issued the first licence to permit the control of badgers in West Gloucestershire.

However the Government has delayed the controversial scheme, citing the need to ‘get it right’ and the ‘optimal time’ for this year had passed.

The Badger Trust and other opponents have taken this delay as renewed hope that the scheme may be stopped. It is expected that further legal challenges may be launched in the New Year, to prevent the project being rekindled.



## Councils putting public health at risk

BPCA's National Survey of Pest Species 2012 received national press coverage and highlighted the dangers Government cuts are having on public health welfare. With 29 councils cutting pest control services between 2010-11, early reports suggest this is set to increase, putting more residents at risk. BPCA is currently collating the data for the next National Survey, set to be released in early in 2013.

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



## Mourning has broken

A flock of gulls pestering mourners at an Eastbourne crematorium has been brought under control using hawks. Eastbourne Borough Council contacted an environmental services company to help stop mourners being dive-bombed as they left the chapel.

Councillor Margaret Bannister, portfolio holder for bereavement services, said: "Staff at the crematorium were becoming aware of the problems that the gulls were causing to visitors of the grounds."

"We had to call in bird control experts as the last thing crematorium visitors want is to have to worry about being attacked by seagulls."

Around eight breeding pairs of seagulls had made their home at the crematorium. The birds usually nest between March and September and get particularly aggressive during this period.

Paul Bates, Managing Director of Cleankill Environmental Services, explained: "The crematorium complex has a flat roof providing an ideal nesting site. We decided it would be best to try to reduce the population over a period of time and start a programme of removing nests and the eggs."

"Alongside this work, we bring in our hawks once a week early on a Thursday morning before the funerals start. The hawks fly at the seagulls and scatter them which makes them uncomfortable. Eventually they decide to find another nesting site."

Councillor Bannister said "The hawk solution has proved very effective, with the benefit that it does not harm the gulls. We believe that by calling in professional experts we have alleviated the problem."

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

## PANORAMA PEST CONTROL SPECIAL

Over the Summer BPCA worked with BBC's Panorama team to produce a show focused on the pest control industry and the detrimental effects local government cutbacks are having on public health pest control.

The Panorama show 'Rats, Trap, Bugs and Cutbacks' went out on Monday 6 August on BBC2. The show focused on the budget cuts to councils, and how some are choosing to disband their pest control teams, while others now charge for previously free services. Panorama also went out with pest controllers to see the problems they face, set up a pest control company to demonstrate how easy it is to enter the market, and focused on the need for regulation of the sector.



The idea came partly from the release of the first British Pest Control Association National Survey of Pest Species. BPCA Chief Executive, Simon Forrester said "With the run-up to the Olympics alongside local authority cutbacks starting to bite, the survey couldn't have been released at a better time." He added "We think it will demonstrate the need to only use professional pest control services such as those provided by BPCA members."

[goo.gl/lg8b1](http://goo.gl/lg8b1)

## Commonsense Compliance!



**Companies and contractors are increasingly under pressure as part of the audit criteria from bodies such as BRC, AIB, The Soil Association, Environmental Health and more.**

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# Rat Island: rat free!

Nearly 18 months after Rat Island was declared 'rat-free', the US Board on Geographic Names has officially restored its original Aleut name, Hawadax Island, reflecting the island's traditional name and noting the successful removal of invasive rats from this important seabird sanctuary.

Located in the Aleutian chain 1,300 miles west of Alaska, this island in 2008 was the largest rat eradication endeavor to date in North America and third largest in the world. Some 25 tons of a brodifacoum bait, made by Bell Laboratories, was broadcast aerially on the island to purge it of rats, once and for all.

Rats were first introduced to the island when a Japanese fishing vessel ran aground in 1778 and thrived ever since, preying on eggs and chicks of nesting seabirds. By the time US authorities initiated the Aleutian Seabird Restoration Project in 2004, the island was 'eerily quiet' without birds.

That's all part of the island's history now that non-native Norway rats were successfully eradicated and, in their place, native seabird species such as the Leach's Storm Petrel, are rebounding.

Peter Martin, Bell Laboratories' Director of Research and Development, said Bell was proud to apply its expertise to developing the aerial bait used to get rid of rats on this important seabird sanctuary.

Martin notes, "We're certain that Hawadax will become a symbol in the international conservation community of how a dedicated group of individuals were able to turn back time to a day where endangered and threatened bird and animal species can again flourish in a pristine environment."

Although uninhabited now, the island was used for millennia by Aleut, who relied on seabirds for clothing, protein and ceremonial garb. It's likely the rats and their destruction of native seabirds negatively impacted what was once a large community.

Some Aleut speakers in the village of Atka, located 300 miles from the island, still referred to it as Hawadax. Rat Island was the name given to it by a Russian explorer in 1827.

In the future, maps put out by the US Geological Service and the Coast Guard will reflect the restored name. And, although there were no ceremonies marking the return to its original name, the change had full support of the APIA and The Aleut Corporation that provided



input to the historical preservation office.

"Every comment was positive and supportive of the change," said Pletnikoff. "It took well over a year, plus two years to determine that the island was rat-free. It was well worth it to restore the historical name and highlight the successful removal of an invasive species that had such detrimental effects on the island."

"Seabirds are essential to our ecosystem. Any temporary loss of high-population-level birds was fair trade-off to get back such an important habitat for threatened and endangered species," she added. "The general numbers of returning seabirds is very impressive. Early reports about recovery of the rare and endemic Giant Aleutian subspecies of Song Sparrow are very exciting."

Since the bait drop in 2008, researchers have been monitoring the island in the Alaska Maritime National Wildlife Refuge for signs of rats and bird recovery, and will return again in 2013.

For Gregg Howald of Island Conservation who worked on the project, the name change also attests to the deep bond between the people and their land.

Howald said "For me, the name change gives us an insight into the impact of the work we do beyond the ecological recovery, and demonstrates the connection the local communities have to the land, and the necessity for strong partnership for sustainability of these restoration programs and projects long after we are down the road to the next island."

"Island Conservation congratulates the people of the Aleutian Islands and Alaska for embracing the removal of rats from Hawadax Island and, with this formal name change, the symbolic return to an earlier time."



## BPCA online

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

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

## Pest controller comes close to winning UK Worker of the Year

Somerset pest controller Tom Edwards from GTC Services came joint second in the 'UK Worker of the Year' competition hosted by Dickies, and sponsored by Seat. The competition winner received a brand new car, with the runners-up winning £1,500 each worth of holiday vouchers.

Tom commented "The whole thing is absolutely unbelievable. Every single one of the other

people who made it into the final were fantastic." Tom added "I didn't even think I would make it into the last six, so to actually be the runner up was so unexpected, I can't explain how great it felt."

UK Worker of the Year is now in its third year of seeking out, rewarding and promoting excellence in the British workforce.

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



## Grain drain

Recent studies by the Australian Grains Research and Development Corporation (GRDC) show the benefit of growers being meticulous about grain hygiene to reduce numbers of stored grain pests.

GRDC Regional Program Manager Darren Hughes said prevention was better than cure when it came to controlling pests in stored grain. "Grain residues in or around storages, or older grain stocks held over from last season provide ideal breeding sites," he said. "As little as one bag of infested grain can produce more than one million insects during a year, which can travel to other grain storages where they will start new infestations."

"Successful grain hygiene involves completely removing of all waste grain from storages and equipment including headers, augers, storage facilities and old grain bags. "Growers need to keep these areas clean, remove sites where insects can shelter and mow weeds around storages."

Dr Hughes said that as well as cleaning up before harvest, growers should embark on a cleaning program straight after harvest – to prevent facilities becoming infested with pests.

He said the best way to get rid of all grain residues involved a combination of sweeping, vacuuming, compressed air, blow/vacuum guns, pressure washers, and fire-fighting hoses.

After finishing the cleaning programme, grain storages and handling equipment can be treated with a structural treatment or fumigant

Stored grain should also be checked regularly for insect pests – at least every four weeks but fortnightly during warmer weather, especially if there is no aeration on the storage.

Dr Hughes said growers should use the harvest period to plan their future grain storage system requirements. This could help them identify issues and opportunities for future harvest operations that could otherwise be forgotten once next year's crop cycle got underway.

[www.storedgrain.com.au](http://www.storedgrain.com.au)



## 'SUPER RATS' INFEST BRITAIN

An increasing number of Britain's rats are mutating to become immune to commonly sold poisons, scientists have warned. Research from

Huddersfield University found 75 per cent of rats in Bristol, Gloucestershire and Wiltshire built up poison resistance, with the most serious mutations being seen in Bath and Wiltshire.

Experts say the rise is down to an incorrect use of poisons, where people have used dosages that are too low.

Rats which are resistant to the poison are fattened up by the bait, with survivors going on to mate with other resistant rodents. This allows a generation of rats that are resistant to existing poisons to build up.

Dr Dougie Clarke, head of biological sciences at Huddersfield University, said "Some pest control companies are still using the same rodenticides – Bromadiolone and Difenacoum – in areas where there are resistant rats and things need to change."

"We're wiping out the normal susceptible rats and we're going to be left solely with resistant rats in this area, so alternatives have to be found to these poisons."

Wildlife experts are also concerned about the risk to other animals – especially cats – which may hunt the rats.

The study aims to survey areas across the country and test samples from 600 rats. So far researchers have tested around 300 rats. Dr Clarke said that it is likely that all rats in Gloucestershire, Wiltshire and Bath could be resistant to poisons within ten years.

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



# Simply the pest

## How to get the best from your PCOs

Are your pest controllers up to date with the latest legislation? Do your contractors know about the recent label changes? You may have hired the best pest control operatives (PCOs) in the land five years ago but without ensuring your pest controllers' constant professional development, your service could be suffering. Unless your PCOs are members of BASIS PROMPT, that is...

The BASIS PROMPT scheme was set up by BASIS, an independent standards setting and auditing organisation for the pesticide and allied industries, working closely with industry and regulatory bodies to promote and develop professional standards.

The BASIS PROMPT scheme is a voluntary scheme for qualified pest controllers (applicants must hold the RSPH/BPCA Level 2 Award in Pest Management or Level 2 Certificate in Pest Control or equivalent). Full members of the scheme are expected to collect 20 CPD points each year through attending trade shows and events, in-house training, supplier-organised seminars, online or distance learning schemes and paid-for training courses. The British Pest Control Association fully supports the aims and objectives of the scheme. BPCA Chief Executive, Simon Forrester said "Any servicing company joining BPCA must ensure all their technicians meet the standards laid down by BASIS, and we regularly check to ensure compliance."

One pest control company embracing the scheme is Beaver Pest Control from London. Managing Director David Lodge said "It is extremely important that pest technicians know how to work in a safe, competent and legal manner. Being a part of the BASIS PROMPT scheme is the best way of demonstrating this to the public and clients." He added "Choosing a contractor that is registered on a CPD scheme such as BASIS PROMPT is a major contributor to receiving a quality, safe and effective service."



**"It is essential that pest control is carried out responsibly by people who are properly trained and competent. Effective pest control is a skilled and technical job."**

Nigel Binns of Pestex Services said "It is essential that pest control is carried out responsibly by people who are properly trained and competent. Effective pest control is a skilled and technical job. Our customers recognise this requirement, and knowing that our technicians are registered on the PROMPT scheme, gives them that assurance." But it's not just servicing companies who have embraced PROMPT – the public sector is getting in on the act too. One local authority already making the most of the scheme is Manchester City

Council. The council's 16-strong Pest Control Service Team provide the council's domestic and housing pest control service, public health approach work as well as offering a commercial service to local businesses. The team also delivers, in partnership with United Utilities, the city's sewer baiting. All of the service team are members of the BASIS PROMPT scheme and have been since the start of 2012. Manchester City Council Pest Control Services Manager Michael Fowler comments "For us, BASIS PROMPT is about demonstrating that we are a professional body and all our service staff have current and up to date service and treatment knowledge. We encourage and support all our technicians in 'self' professional development."

Michael adds, "A lot of people within the city want to use local authority services as they are trusted and that we have a proactive approach towards public health. Like most councils in the current environment, the service is responsible for income generation to cover the services costs, and being registered with BASIS PROMPT demonstrates that we are a professional establishment with the proper training to support our residents and businesses with quality and professional service provision."

BASIS managing director Rob Simpson agrees: "BASIS has been involved in CPD schemes for at least 20 years. I think it's vitally important to be able to demonstrate a level of professionalism and for people to see that a professional job is being done." Moreover, he adds, "In terms of the pest controller's feelings of worth, it's important that they know they have achieved a professional standard, recognised throughout the industry."

"A pest control customer", says Simpson, "wants to know that the technicians they are dealing with are competent and not going to





rip them off. A BASIS PROMPT technician will have their PROMPT ID card with them and be able to demonstrate they are trained and professional.”

An additional consideration is the plain fact that a technician who qualified in 2005 might be perfectly competent at their job but have not necessarily kept themselves up to date with changes in anticoagulant rodenticide (for example) or changes to bait box usage. One good example is the recent changes to the rat, rabbit and mole product

aluminum phosphide. Burrows, runs and harborage cannot now be treated unless they are ten meters away from any building occupied by man or animals. Previous rules stated three meters. Without regular training, a pest controller may remain blissfully unaware of these changes but be perfectly able to continue operating.

Rob Simpson says it's vital for customers, authorities and the industry to back the scheme. “Customers of pest control services have a responsibility to ensure they use qualified and well-trained pest controllers and to make sure they are doing things properly. And for food service clients, it's a no-brainer to employ people who are properly trained to do the job. It's important we have pest controllers doing their job efficiently and responsibly.”

Chris Turner, Director of Rokill Pest Control Services said “We hold an annual service meeting for all staff, hosted by industry experts in vertebrate and invertebrate pest species. The annual service meeting, regional meetings, trade magazines

and one to one training all allows our technicians to accrue the skills and knowledge our staff need to do their job efficiently and responsibly.

Michael Fowler added, “We are focused on developing our staff so they operate to the best professional standards. Why wouldn't we want them to be BASIS PROMPT members?”



Membership for the BASIS PROMPT scheme costs £10 (+VAT) per applicant for an initial registration fee, plus an annual renewal fee of £30 (+VAT) (or £25 +VAT for members of BPCA). Those who have passed RSPH Level 2 in Pest Control will qualify automatically for free entry into the register in the year that they pass their examination, and will not need to pay a membership fee for the rest of that year.

For more information and to sign up please visit [www.basis-reg.com](http://www.basis-reg.com)



## Are you a registered BASIS PROMPT professional?



PROFESSIONAL PEST CONTROLLERS REGISTER



PROMPT is an independent industry- recognised register of suitably qualified people who can genuinely claim to be professionals in public health pest control and related activities.



Members make a commitment to lifelong learning Continuing Professional Development (CPD) which all professionals in leading industries are expected to make.

Show your customers that you're a true professional.



For further information, go to [www.basispestcontrol.com](http://www.basispestcontrol.com)

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A special report from Chartered Marketer and bestselling business author, Dee Blick.

There comes a time for most businesses when growth or change is inevitable. A new and prestigious client with a big demand accelerates the need for growth or perhaps your business is on a carefully planned improvement and growth strategy.

Growth comes with many challenges including recruiting, not to mention upskilling your existing team. You have to find new suppliers of the right calibre. The knowledge that's been in your head for years has to be documented and turned into super-efficient processes. Then there's reviewing your existing plant – can it handle the increased capacity or is more investment needed? Terms and conditions have to be beefed up and health and safety is, well, a minefield.

As part of this “getting fit for growth” have you thought about your pest control strategy? I would hazard a guess that for most businesses the answer is a resounding no. Yet reviewing your pest control alongside all other challenges and plans is pivotal if you're not to fail at the first hurdle. Let's examine why this is the case...

### Identify what your existing pest control contract covers and what it doesn't

Don't assume it will extend to your new unit; that it will cover your extended storage area, that it's elastic and will magically cope with an expanded perimeter, therefore ignoring your pest controller until an outbreak occurs. Walk them through your plans in detail so they can provide a higher specification of service. Let them have unrestricted access to the units you're planning on using so they can bring their forensic skills into each crevice and crack.

### Changes can bring in new pests

Novel suppliers, new or increased quantities of stock can bring new pests through the doors of your business, making their way through all those lovely added entry and exit points, wreaking havoc in your storage areas and on the shop floor. Again, let your pest controller undertake a nuts and bolts risk assessment of your business so that your door to all pests remains firmly closed. In all likelihood they will provide expert advice on a range of deterrents (for example strip doors and high specification fly killers) in addition to the need for a closer liaison with you as part of an effective regime. Trust their advice in the same way that you trust your commercial insurance broker when they're reviewing your existing insurance policy against your growth plans.

### Feathered friends

Your current contract may not include bird proofing and bird control. However if you're moving into premises that have historically had problems with birds, or your new product lines are likely to attract the unwanted attention of our feathered friends, you can't ignore this.

### Staff training and good habits

If you've not trained your staff in the importance of following all business procedures to the letter (including basic pest prevention measures such as why it's important to clean up spillages immediately and why storage processes must be adhered to) then now is the time to do so. Instil good habits in your existing team so they are emulated by new team members. Work closely with your pest contractor so that your made to measure 'pest aware and pest management' training programme is documented and disseminated.

“Your pest controller should know the pest control that your growing business needs by understanding at the outset precisely what you want to achieve from growing your business,” says Ralph Izod, Managing Director of Dyno-Pest, recognised experts in pest management for businesses involved in the preparation, storage and distribution of foodstuffs and a long established BPCA member. “They must be proactive too and this entails understanding the legislation your business has to comply with and then adhering to it with a holistic pest management and pest control programme. BPCA members are regularly updated with changes in legislation which means that clients get the very best, most up to date and accurate advice. Don't look upon pest control as a mechanical box ticking exercise. If you want to be fit for growth with no weak links in your strategy you must trust your BPCA pest contractor as a knowledgeable, proactive and accredited professional.”

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



# Policing your pest control contractor

Your first thought might be - why would I want to do that? But are you making the most of your money and ensuring you're getting the service you think you're paying for?

When you buy anything you want to get good value, therefore it stands to reason that if you know a little about the service that you are paying for, it will be easier for you to 'run the ruler' over it from time to time. It's standard business practice after all, and comes under the banner of good housekeeping. The consequences of ineffective pest control can be damaging and detrimental to your business, so here's a few pointers to help you police your pest controller and establish if they are the real deal.

## Detailed survey

This should be undertaken before any work starts. A professional pest controller would spend time looking in all sorts of out-of-the-way places where pests could hide. A site survey is really important to establish:

- The size of a problem
- How it should be tackled
- What contributory factors exist (hygiene and pest proofing issues)
- What 'self help' advice can be given to the prospect/client
- What health and safety issues exist on site.



Martin Harvey of Harvey Environmental Services investigates the value of policing your contractor.

A good survey will take a reasonable period of time – it's not a five minute job and certainly shouldn't be done over the phone.

Ensure your contractor is taking the time to survey!

## Routine visits – make sure you get enough

The industry standard for routine pest control inspections/treatments tends to be eight visits a year. Common pests can reproduce every month or so, therefore a good inspection on a six or seven week basis will find signs of new pests, and a 'nip it in the bud' solution can be delivered before the problems gets out of hand.

The routine visit frequency needs to be relevant to the pests that are either active at the time of the survey or that are likely to become an issue, ensuring a precautionary system is set up to detect and control. If you have been sold on the need for 8 visits a year – evenly spaced to interrupt common pests breeding cycles, make sure that this is happening. However there has been a move by naive companies to quote for lesser frequencies of routine visits – therefore enabling them to present a lower quote. Simple? No – not really. It may be cheap but if you consider the breeding cycle issues of pests this may actually be placing your business at a higher risk of pest problems.

/continued over...

## Planned follow-up visits for infestations

If a pest problem is discovered on a routine visit, remedial work done on that visit should not be deemed 'enough' to cure the issue, and further follow up visit should be made a week to ten days later to ensure the problem has been dealt with. The danger of failing to return for a follow up visit will make getting to the root of, and solving the problem, even harder. This could also cause a pest to consume a pesticide, but not enough to eliminate it (known in the trade as a sublethal dose), which in turn can lead to tolerance and eventually resistance to the pesticide. In general terms, to not follow up on an infestation is unprofessional and bad practice.

## Regular inspections of all areas

This may include the cellars, roof voids, false ceilings, storage areas, back office, front of house and manufacturing areas. This takes time, so please be prepared to pay a reasonable sum for a good quality job. Beware and stay away from quotations that seem really cheap, because quite simply the job will not be done properly for such a small amount of money. It won't be done for very long at that rate and the price will either be revisited fairly quickly or 'extras' which cost the earth will begin to appear. Or (and it has been known) the company doing it on the cheap will simply go out of business – meaning that you have to go through the hassle of finding another company all over again. Ever heard the expression 'buy cheap, buy twice'?

## Inclusion of detecting devices/monitors

Good pest control is NOT about placing bait boxes – it's about what is happening in between them. It's all down to the ability to spot signs of pest evidence, therefore beware of a pest controller who arrives on site solely asking to be shown where the bait boxes are. Bait boxes and insect detectors are important, but they have to be seen as a monitoring device that aids the pest control measures/regime and not simply the sole pest control measure.

## The contractor has a torch close to hand

Finding pests involves looking in dark, obscure places, so to do this properly your pest controller needs to carry and use a good quality torch. This is perhaps the most important tool of the trade. The other real basic requirements to find pests are ones that don't actually cost anything – they are eyes that see and knees that bend, and a thought process that is constantly asking "Where are they now?" with respect to locating pests, bearing in mind that many pests are nocturnal and to control them you have to take the pesticide to the pest, rather than just putting baits out and hoping the pests are going to find them.

## Wearing gloves

Pests are vectors for all sorts of diseases (e.g. Weils disease contracted from rat urine which, if it gets into an open cut, can cause some nasty

**“Companies with high staff turnover rates normally have high customer turnover rates as well.”**

illnesses including damage to the liver and kidneys, or lead to jaundice) so it makes good sense for your pest control contractor (who engages with pests and pest harbourages many times a day) to wear good quality disposable gloves.

## Regular reporting from your contractor

A legible report should be produced and discussed with the relevant member of your staff. Unfortunately, in many occasions the responsibility for the 'report book' falls down the chain and ends up with a secretary, a security guard or even a cleaner. The contractor should raise the profile of the work that they are doing and ensure this file is kept with a senior person in your organisation – senior enough to authorise relevant remedial works to address pest problems.

The pest risks to a business change with the seasons and sometimes day to day, so there will always be something that your contractor could and should be advising you on to reduce pest risks. A company that never speaks to you about a concern that they have could be labeled as simply 'going through the motions' and concentrating on delivering the number of visits that are set out in the contract but no more. Does this service level sound familiar? Your contractor should provide non-cost or very low cost observations/comments to protect you and your business. These are everyday occurrences and it's always a little odd to see a report book with no recommendations in it for years, so make sure you're checking yours and that your organisation is acting on the professional's recommendations.

**Clients stay clients when serviced properly, looked after, not given undue hassle, receive good value for money, and receive honest advice both verbally and in writing.**

**Once pest control is set up, never be afraid to ask the local manager to pay a visit to ensure that the service and advice received is correct. Be wary of companies that always want to sell you something.**

## Professionally trained personnel

Look for evidence that the contractor you use (or consider) takes training seriously. The old adage of 'if you think training is expensive, try ignorance' applies. A good trade association, such as BPCA, insists all members prove they have the required training and qualifications, so check if your contractor is a BPCA member to ensure they meet proper training requirements. Trained contractors kept updated with industry relevant knowledge are more likely to deliver a good quality piece of work when they visit your site.

Ask for copies of training certificates for the service team that will be visiting your site, along with copies of that year's training plan. If you want to be extra picky, ask for copies of the points that your

service team have achieved so far that year in their Continuing Professional Development (CPD) scheme. All of these requests should be easily dealt with by your contractor. Finally, make sure you contractor has intimate knowledge of any industry standards you need to abide by, such as the BRC or supermarket guidelines, so that they can meet and exceed these rigorous standards.

### Expect to keep the same technician

The quality of the technician that comes to visit on a pre-determined frequency is absolutely vital. This technician should be (90% of the time) the same person. If you are getting a new person three or four times a year what does that say about your contractor?

If the technician you normally see changes (and there could be legitimate reasons for this) how does the new technician know what the intricacies of your site are as far as the pest control situation is concerned, the key staff involved, and other considerations such as health and safety? Good companies will get the outgoing technician to accompany and 'handover.' This is not a luxurious approach – this is a responsible practice and is supremely customer focused.

### Quality assurance checks

Check that quality is being delivered out in the field by periodic site checks made by the technician's manager. This should be an added benefit (within the cost) of the service agreement. Client satisfaction

questionnaires can take place over the phone, often these will be towards the start of a contract period but good companies will repeat this throughout the business relationship.

### References

Have you been provided with references relevant to your organisation? Ensure these are current clients of the contractor.

Most importantly, ensure your pest control contractor is delivering the service you're paying for. Service staff that visit your site should:

- Carry out an excellent pest control inspection – (not just checking baits)
- Maintain pest monitors on site in a clean, palatable and effective condition
- Carry out any relevant treatment for pests activity found
- Provide relevant recommendations to reduce pest risk to your business – this may mean additional cost, or may not
- Foster a good working relationship with you, the customer – after all, you pay their wages!
- Ensure you understand the ongoing need for such a vital public health service.

If you need any advice and support with policing or selecting your contractor, contact BPCA, or find out more at [www.bpca.org.uk/advice](http://www.bpca.org.uk/advice)

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# WHAT'S EATING YOUR PROFITS?



**Repercussions of poor weather conditions are likely to be far reaching, with crop yields seriously reduced. This year's crop is more precious than ever, and with colder weather conditions and the lack of food left in the fields encouraging the increased movement of pests towards farm buildings and grain stores, BPCA President Henry Mott of Conquer Pest Control investigates the dangers of inappropriate pest control strategies in farming, and the pests that can cause the most damage to profits.**

Recent news reports expect food prices to rise after poor UK harvests due to recent wet weather. In early October the National Farmers Union warned that wheat yields could be reduced by up to 15% on the five year average, with productivity down to 1980s levels. The British Retail Consortium believes food prices are already being driven up after a rise in grain costs following the worst US drought in 50 years and a Russian heat wave. So do we really need more crops being eradicated? With over £2 billion of grain being produced and stored by British farmers every year, and estimates of over £10 billion in livestock and associated products being traded each year, protecting those assets must be the number one priority of all concerned.

By now most harvests will be safely stored inside grain sheds or possibly in the hands of a third party. All the hard work that has been carried out over the year is now complete and farmers are busy watching the prices of grain with great interest. The quality and quantity of the harvest will ultimately dictate the profit margin. After spending a considerable amount of money ensuring the crop in the field has been cared for in such a way as to maximise quality and yield, no doubt farmers will want to ensure that whilst in storage, the crop remains in top condition.

Conscientious farmers will have considered pest control in their strategy to maximise profits and have employed one of the following **options** to ensure success...

- 1** Personal inspection of the grain store, when time allows, and if necessary, buy poisons from the local agricultural merchant to deal with any problems.
- 2** Leave it to the farm manager as it is his responsibility to look after the grain.
- 3** Use the local gamekeeper to keep an eye on things.
- 4** Use a local one man band pest controller who comes round fairly regularly, and leave it to them to look after the store.
- 5** Employ a pest control company who are members of the British Pest Control Association. By employing a BPCA member you can be assured all their staff are qualified and competent and the company is fully insured and audited on a regular basis by the Association meaning standards are maintained.

Nowadays farmers have to be able to provide with his stock a record of the feeds, pesticides and veterinary treatments that have been used before the animals are slaughtered at the central abattoir, and that these records are often required to be distributed nationally. Detailed records need to be kept in respect

of grain handling practices and storage. The auditing process driven through higher standards expected by consumers and distributors, has further impacted on farming practices who are now likely to be far more scrutinised in the way they operate their business. Farmers now may well find unannounced auditors turning up at the farm gate, and pest control and its management will no doubt feature. This all raises the question – are they employing the correct pest control strategy for their business?

**Options one and two** may be perfectly fine if the paper audit is kept up to date. This must as a minimum detail record what, where and how the pest control work has been carried out, list infestations that have occurred and should have an ongoing record of recommendations made and completed, to maximise the effectiveness of the work. Regular inspections are essential to good pest control and, as in any industry it is vital that the person carrying out the work is both adequately trained and is on a Continuing Professional Development scheme, to ensure they are both keeping up with current legislation and techniques. What is not acceptable is pest control that is sporadic and relies on 'Granddad' getting a bucket of bait from the local agricultural merchant and placing it where and when he sees fit. It usually fails to work, may lead to potentially dangerous occurrences and given the risks associated with secondary poisoning, this is unacceptable behaviour.



**Options three and four** are frequently no better than the first two options. 'Rustic Reggie' and his terrier can be entertaining but paperwork is often not his forte and his training may be either very basic or out of date. This could lead to illegal techniques being carried out which the farm owner would be responsible for. He may well carry no liability insurances and is unlikely to be of much assistance if you find yourself having to deal with an unimpressed auditor, when a rat runs over his foot!

This brings us to **option five**. Rural pest control operatives must have the skills to advise and if necessary deal with all species of pests, including birds, rodents, stored product insects, rabbits and moles to name a few. Also they must provide the farmer with the comprehensive records that are required.

Properly trained and qualified pest control officers don't arrive by accident. They will have attended courses and passed examinations in identifying and dealing with pest problems. They will know how to employ the most current products and



**“It is inconceivable that food resources worth billions of pounds should not be properly preserved.”**

techniques in pest management giving you the peace of mind you are in safe hands. The British Pest Control Association is the only pest association that demands its member companies train their staff to a particular level. BPCA also demands that 100% of a member company's employees are on a recognised CPD scheme by 2015.

Once you've chosen the right pest control strategy for you, it's important to take a step back and consider how you can

prevent and control those core pests that are potentially causing the most damage to your business.

## Rodents

We are all aware of the damage rodents (mainly rats) can do to stored crops. For every kilogramme of product consumed by rodents, 10kg of produce destined for human or animal consumption is contaminated with their urine and droppings, rendering it useless. When rats gain access to, and settle in farm buildings, a number of issues arise that make their presence unacceptable. Rats are capable of spreading a wide number of viruses, bacteria and parasites that can have a detrimental effect on the health of both humans and animals. Approximately 10 people and a number of dogs die from Leptospirosis (Weil's Disease) every year as a direct result of contact with brown rats and their urine, so control is essential.



What action can you take to help discourage rodents from your farms and buildings? Always remember that rats especially are animals of habit. They like to feel comfortable in their environment, and the less it is disturbed, the better it is for rodents. If you have been meaning to tidy up, or have some long standing items around the farm to throw away, now is an excellent time to remove such items. By doing so you will start to remove areas where rodents can live, and you'll deter them from moving in to the farm areas by continually modifying their environment.

When you do get signs of activity, act upon them as soon as possible. If you do use rodenticide to control infestation, make sure you are using enough to control the infestation and you are visiting the bait on a regular basis to ensure that it is replenished as required, and there has been no spillage likely to contaminate non target species. Remember anyone administering pest control treatments should be professionally trained and qualified, so if you're not we would recommend using a trusted and professional pest controller, such as BPCA members, to avoid you breaching any legislation.

/continued over...



## Grain storage pests

The principal causes of spoilage in stored grain are fungi, insects and mites. It is important that any pests found are correctly identified, monitored and controlled appropriately.

Infestations of grain pests such as the sawtooth grain beetle and grain weevil can be devastating. Unchecked infestations will decimate stored grain and render it useless. As always, in such situations, prevention is better than cure. By cooling the grain to temperatures of 15°C, you can slow down and eventually stop insect breeding and development. Complement the cooling of grain with regular inspections to product and storage areas by a suitably qualified person, and you will ensure that infestation will be spotted early and that insect activity can be dealt with before any major damage occurs.

If you do find evidence of insects, rapid action is required and fumigation with a metallic phosphide will usually be the most suitable course of action. However, remember that the fumigants currently available for fumigating grain are highly toxic and can kill.

There is no antidote to phosphine, the gas that is released by metallic phosphides and in the hands of an unskilled operator, these products can be deadly. It is essential that you ensure the process of fumigation is dealt with by a skilled contractor who understands the pest, the product and the treatment site. This will ensure that you, your staff and your animals remain safe during

“Farmers now may well find unannounced auditors turning up at the farm gate and pest control and its management will no doubt feature. This all raises the question – are they employing the correct pest control strategy for their business?”

the fumigation process. When you require the services of a fumigator to inspect or treat grain, always use one who holds the BPCA's Certificate of Proficiency for Fumigation Operators, and is a current full servicing member of the BPCA.

To assist you with grain storage pests, the Home Grown Cereals Authority (HGCA) has produced a key reference source for the identification and management of grain storage pests.

Download the document at <http://goo.gl/DRrjV>

In all cases we would recommend acquiring the services of a BPCA company for pest infestations. If you need any advice on pest prevention or control, you can find our more at [www.bpca.org.uk/advice](http://www.bpca.org.uk/advice)



# Conquer Pest Control Ltd



## WHAT'S EATING YOUR PROFITS?

By now (November) harvests will be safely stored inside grain sheds or possibly in the hands of a third party. We are all aware of the damage that pests can do to stored crops and the associated costs.

For every kilo of product consumed by rodents,

**10 kilo of produce destined for human or animal consumption is contaminated!**

**The more conscientious farmers will have considered pest control in their strategy to maximise profits...**

**All rodent control methods are performed in a responsible and professional manner to achieve control and ultimately minimise risks to your business.**



**Trapping, proofing and hygiene methods including:**

- Pre-harvest Grain store cleaning, Spraying & fumigation services
- Building maintenance to prevent access points and harborage
- Advice in managing the environment to deny basic survival requirements such as food, water and shelter

**Here's what Steven Padley, Managing Director of G W Padley Poultry Limited think of us:**

*We have employed Conquer Pest Control for many years to provide a control programme on our farms. We value their knowledge and expertise to deliver both a reliable and successful control programme and would confidently recommend them to anyone who needs to implement a comprehensive and auditable programme.*



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



BPCA launched its new website in November, with a whole host of new features to help you solve your pest problems. We've also relaunched our online member directory.

All BPCA members provide trained and competent staff, and have passed a detailed audit both on joining BPCA and at regular points thereafter.

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

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

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 or call 01332 294 288

### Are you a pest control customer?

BPCA can also help with additional information for...

- Producing your pest control specifications, contracts and tenders
- Pest awareness training
- Associate membership of BPCA
- Consultancy services
- Pest identification
- General pest advice

### Satisfied people!

*"I needed a price comparison for my existing pest control supplier, and I was pleasantly surprised by the ease of finding other companies with the relevant skill set."*

**Baked goods manufacturer, Yorkshire**

*"I'd definitely recommend BPCA as a source of unbiased advice. I called for support and BPCA gave me advice on how to select a pest controller – what to look out for, red flags, and even helped me set up the tendering process."*

**Packaging company, Kent**

*"BPCA has advised me on changes to legislation, new industry developments, and given a clear idea of what I should be checking with my contractor."*

**Food manufacturer, High Wycombe**

*"I couldn't believe how much support we were given in tendering our pest control contracts. BPCA was there throughout the process, and gave us the advice and knowledge we needed to pick the right company for us."*

**University campus, London**

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# BPCA in the dock

In late September the Society of Food, Hygiene and Technology (SOFHT) gave the food industry a unique opportunity to witness at first hand something few had dared to watch – the prosecution of a food manufacturer for inadequate pest control.

Run exactly like a real trial and based on an actual case, set in a working court with professional barristers and solicitors, the SOFHT Mock Trial was held at Brown's Courtrooms in London, designed to highlight the potential dangers you may face working in the food manufacturing industry.

SOFHT organises its mock trials once every two years to help give the food industry a taste of what it is like to become involved in complex litigation, if food protection legislation is breached. During the mock trial a team of leading food lawyers from Greenwoods Solicitors and 6 Pump Chambers re-enact a trial that is based on a genuine case. The full day is completed under court conditions, with witnesses swearing the oath and the court rising as the judges enter and leave. The day gives attendees the chance to view the case as it unfolds, and experience the pressures and complexities of a genuine case. Event organiser and SOFHT Chair, Catherine Watkinson, explains "Litigation is a chief concern for our members as it can be expensive and time consuming. The mock trial is the chance to witness the questioning process from a safe distance and glean important details which could prevent inspections and accidental breaches in food law from turning into a full-blown court summons."

The trial was based on the case of a food manufacturer summoned to court after a number of issues were discovered by Environmental Health Officers (EHOs) during an inspection of their site. Two of the four charges directed at the manufacturer directly referred to failures in pest control that breached the Food Hygiene (England) Regulations 2006. As the case focused on pest activity, BPCA was

invited in as the industry specialists, and to act as an expert witness in this complex case. Step forward BPCA Technical Manager Richard Moseley, who would have his day in court.

The morning sessions were devoted to the prosecution and the case they had built against the food manufacturer. Evidence from two EHOs with supporting evidence in the form of reports and pictures provided what appeared to be damaging evidence of uncontrolled pest activity, poor hygiene conditions and a lack of management responsibility on the site. Indeed, if you only viewed the first morning session, you may have thought the trial would have been finished by lunchtime. However, there are always two sides to every story, and the courts gave the defence team a chance to question the EHOs, raising a number of key questions that put the prosecution on the back foot.

By lunchtime, the defence had asked enough questions of the prosecution's witnesses for the judge to allow the trial to continue into the afternoon and allow the defence to put its case. The first witness was the factory owner, who gave a vociferous defence of his site and the 'supposed' conditions that the EHOs reported on. He was followed by an expert witness who had been an EHO and was currently working with the accused factory to help develop HACCP systems. In his opinion the site had the satisfactory controls in place and had shown due diligence in its cleaning and pest control regime, and that the EHOs had been unrealistic in their expectations, with some of their conclusions having no relevance to food safety. This expert again raised some key issues, but his links to the factory may have blunted his impact.

Finally, it was the turn of BPCA Technical Manager Richard Moseley to take the stand and give his expert opinion. Richard explains “I had full access to the pest control contractor reports prior to the court case, and this was principally what I was questioned about.” He added “The reports showed that the pest contractor had carried out regular routine visits, had offered recommendations, and had attended emergency callouts when contacted. However, it was clear from the documentation that there was no indication that the site had actioned any of the recommendations made by the contractor as the paperwork lacked a section where the customer could indicate that pest prevention advice had been completed and signed off.” This, Richard felt, was a key issue regarding the allegations made by the EHOs, as there would always be an element of doubt over what the customer had or had not done to meet the pest controller’s recommendations. The lack of access to a written contract at the trial also had a bearing, as the prosecution was able to highlight that no one knew exactly what the pest contractor was responsible for, and if they were meeting their contractual obligations.

At the end of the SOFHT mock trial the attendees have the chance to vote on what they think the outcome should be, and then to question the prosecution and defence teams. Interestingly, the decision was a straight 50/50 split between those who thought the EHO’s evidence was strong enough, and those who felt the defence had cast enough doubt on the case to avoid a prosecution. The judge on the other hand was quite clear that the food producer had a case to answer. The food company owner was found guilty on all four breaches of the Food Hygiene (England) Regulations 2006 and was fined £25,015, £10,000 of which related directly to charges regarding pest infestation.

Richard Moseley was under no doubt that key lessons can be taken from the mock trial. He said “The trial was run in good spirits, but if this had been a real trial it would have been incredibly stressful for all those involved.” What of the judge’s summing up regarding the two pest related offences? Richard added “The judge was clear that, although the food site employed

a professional pest control company, the site was not making the best use of the knowledge and expertise of their contractor, which has led to the heightened risk of rodent infestation and ultimately prosecution.” While the pest controller’s report stated no active rodent infestation, clients need to remain vigilant to check stocks and premises for potential entry of rodents, and of course take the advice of their pest professional.”

“Customers must realise that putting the pest control in the hands of a professional does not mean they no longer need to be concerned about pests. Maintaining a pest-free environment is a partnership, and sites must do what they can to action pest controllers’ recommendations or it may come back to haunt them in court.” Richard explains “The mock trial highlighted the importance of pest controllers producing detailed, clear reports on every visit. So it’s important to always bear in mind that at some future date, your records may be evidence in a court of law. Make sure your reports reflect the professionalism and quality of your service.”

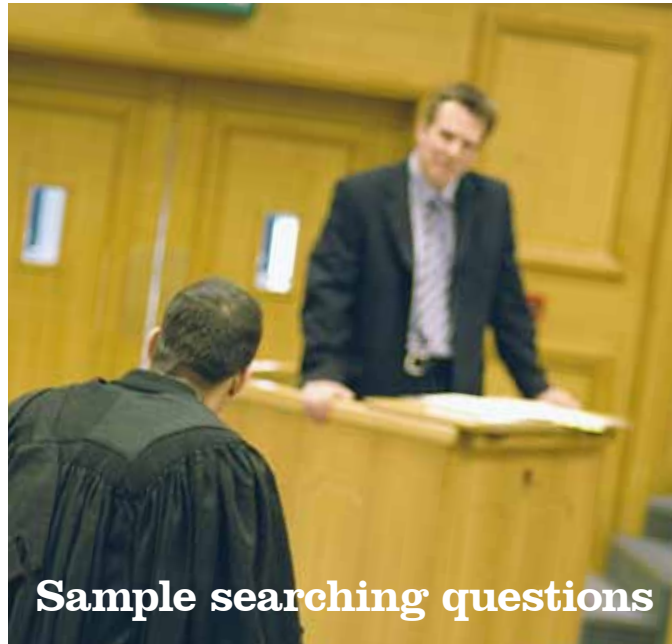
If you’re worried about what you’ve heard about the SOFHT Mock

Trial, then make sure you take the appropriate action. Mock trial solicitor, Kathryn Gilbertson, advises “Anyone who thinks they may face a similar situation should make sure they do everything possible to stay out of court, and consulting your pest controller should be the first port of call.” Effective pest control requires a partnership of mutual understanding between client and contractor. A comprehensive pest control specification is one of the best ways to protect your business from prosecution and reputation damage due to pest activity. Similarly, the selection of the right company first time may keep your business out of court and pest-free.

As an **alexo** reader, you’re already part of the way there in keeping your business out of court, but if you need any additional support and advice, BPCA is here to help. BPCA can provide you with the help you need to design effective pest control specifications, tendering and selecting a suitable pest control company, and with drawing up bespoke contracts with your chosen company.

Find out more at

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

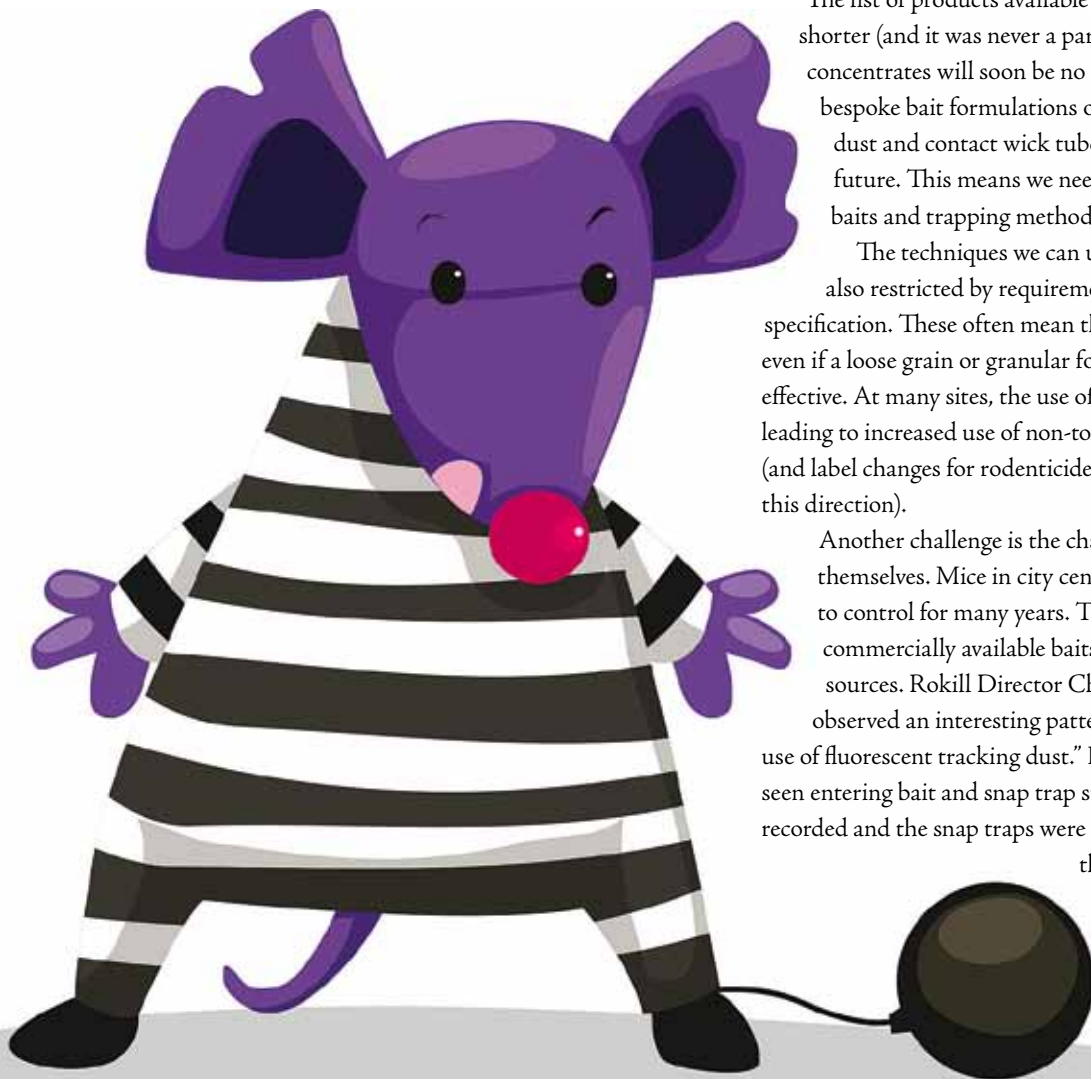


## Sample searching questions

- Q** Where are the samples of the mouse droppings that you have had tested to confirm they are droppings?  
**A** We did not take any samples.
- Q** Where are the written notes that you took on-site for the court to view?  
**A** They are in our office, we have prepared typed notes.
- Q** Why wasn’t anybody on-site subject to a PACE (Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984) interview during the EHO visit?  
**A** We did not think it was required due to the level of evidence we discovered.
- Q** Were the pest control contractor records referred to, in order to determine control measures in place for rodents?  
**A** No.

# Challenges in rodent control

Rodent control has always been a challenge, particularly in food manufacturing and storage premises, where rodents can often have easy access to an unlimited food supply. Dave Perrett from Rokill Pest Control Services explains the challenges pest controllers face when controlling rodent infestations.



The pressure for food companies to maintain pest free conditions has never been higher. Food manufacturing sites have to comply with complex specifications for pest control, and retailers are regularly inspected by Environmental Health Officers (EHOs), with severe consequences if rodent infestations are found. Along with these challenges, there are a number of factors impacting on the pest control industry, making it increasingly difficult to control rodent infestations in food manufacturing and storage premises.

The list of products available for rodent control becomes ever shorter (and it was never a particularly long list!). Liquid concentrates will soon be no longer available for creating bespoke bait formulations or for using as liquid bait. Contact dust and contact wick tubes will also be lost in the near future. This means we need to rely more heavily on edible baits and trapping methods.

The techniques we can use in food manufacturing sites are also restricted by requirements of the pest control specification. These often mean that solid block baits must be used, even if a loose grain or granular formulation would be more effective. At many sites, the use of toxic bait is restricted further, leading to increased use of non-toxic indicator baits or snap trap (and label changes for rodenticides have also guided the industry in this direction).

Another challenge is the change of behaviour of the rodents themselves. Mice in city centres have been notoriously difficult to control for many years. They frequently ignore commercially available baits in favour of alternative food sources. Rokill Director Chris Turner said "We have recently observed an interesting pattern of behaviour, shown with the use of fluorescent tracking dust." He explains "Mouse prints were seen entering bait and snap trap stations, however, no bait take was recorded and the snap traps were not tripped. The prints showed that mice had entered from both sides, but backed out rather

“It is important we remember that control strategies that rely solely on mice entering plastic stations will not always be fully effective.”



than having to cross the treadle plate of the trap.” It is important we remember that control strategies that rely solely on mice entering plastic stations will not always be fully effective.

When treating for rats, there can be the added complication of resistance to second generation anticoagulant rodenticides Bromadiolone and Difenacoum. Our experience shows that this issue is increasing frequent as resistance has been confirmed by analysis of tail samples. So is the picture all doom and gloom? Actually, no it isn't. With challenges arise opportunities. When the existing array of pest control products is limited, the most important factor in achieving pest-free conditions is the skill, commitment and attitude of the technicians carrying out the treatment, combined with the ability to communicate effectively with the client and ensure a joint approach to solving pest problems is established and maintained.

Rokill believe in the importance of a thorough inspection and survey to identify all the areas that rodents are active. Mice ignoring baits laid in the usual places, where they would normally consume them with relish can be a problem. But if placed in enclosed voids or cavities where they harbour, along with installing inspection hatches into these areas should rectify the problem. As last resort, carrying out sticky board treatments in line with the BPCA Code of Practice is also an essential tool.

These treatments need to be intensive and pest controllers regularly use several hundred boards at a single time to give a maximum knock down effect. It is beneficial to continue these treatments until clear visits are obtained, rather than relying on a one off treatment.

Other factors that we find are important include getting the contract specification right, based on an assessment of the particular needs of the site, employing night visits when needed, baiting and proofing every last gap and hole, and working with the client to ensure that the housekeeping is as thorough as possible. Do these things right and there will always be a solution to your pest problem.

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

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# FOOD PEST CONTROL SETTING THE STANDARD



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



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

The regulatory framework (principally, the Food Safety Act 1990 and the Food Hygiene Regulations 2005 made under it) deems food unsafe if it is considered to be injurious to health or unfit for human consumption. It lays down general hygiene requirements for all food business operators.

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

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

body control, hygiene, housekeeping and allergens."

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

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

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

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

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Pest control as a subject remains something of a taboo among the UK's large food groups however. Those retailers approached for this article declined to contribute, as did the BRC itself. Though, Oldbury says "The large food companies have got it all neatly sown up. Their reputations are at stake in that respect." However, he says, the smaller food outlets and facilities can be a very different story. "What the eye doesn't see the heart doesn't grieve", says Oldbury, adding: "They tend to skimp on that".

It's expensive keeping up a full pest control programme and he acknowledges the current economic pressures no doubt contribute to the levels of service cover that some food businesses will invest in. Further, as he points out, cutbacks in public sector resourcing must eventually have an impact on the effective enforceability of the legislation. "We don't necessarily have the staff available to police it to the extent we did in the past."

Arguably, while the commercial standards may compensate for reductions in public enforcement (albeit only in the businesses that adopt or are subject to them) without judicial scrutiny of their auditors' interpretation of their provisions, consistency of application could become an issue for the pestcontrol profession.

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

David Lodge, Service Director at Beaver pest Control agrees the point. He agrees a variation in interpretation can be a real issue in practice. "On occasions we do have a problem meeting the varying standards from different auditors for our larger clients". He gives an example: "We provided pest control to a manufacturer of plastic cutlery and plates [supplying] major

shopping chains. They were receiving audits. Our feedback from the audits was continually confusing and contradictory – there seemed to be no set standards." Beaver Pest Control offered to discuss the issues with the various auditors but their initiative was continually declined. Eventually, Lodge says, "it became apparent that although the client and Beaver were trying to comply with all of their recommendations, [the auditors] were angling for a national company to carry out the pest control. The client supported us strongly but eventually agreed to employ a national supplier."

Tony Baker says the standards are "very specific" on pest control. The BPCA consulted with the BRC on the current Food Safety Standard (Issue 6) and other standards on technical aspects of pest control requirements. He welcomes this involvement

wholeheartedly and thinks it can only be for the good. "In most food premises, pest control is the lowest possible priority", he claims. "Pest control for any business is a grudge purchase." David Oldbury is in agreement here, saying much of the time a business will engage pest control on the basis of the lowest quote "and that might not necessarily be the best coverage for the contract."

David Lodge says companies are much more likely to pay more if they have to comply with external auditing. "The level of service will be driven by the client's needs, their buyers' demands, their own business ethos and their available budget." He reiterates though that the auditors often seem to be "rather

uncoordinated in their varying demands". He thinks they "need to understand that the national companies are not always

better than local SMEs." Auditors also should be open to liaising with the incumbent service provider to establish a forward looking and acceptable provision of pest control standards, Lodge suggests. "A closer working relationship with the BPCA is I believe the way forward".

Guidelines drawn up by the National Pest Advisory Panel (NPAP) of the CIEH (Pest Control in the Food Industry (2009)) are aimed at the food-manufacturing sector. The Guidance states: "If standards and guidelines for pest control are to achieve the aim of promoting best practice they must be practical and flexible." The standard should be risk-based, the Guidance emphasises, in order to address the issues raised by the risk to public health due to activities of pests, and to the environment.



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



Oldbury would like to see food businesses specify that their pest control contractors have an appropriate professional standing. "We're quite concerned that not all contractors are members of Continuing Professional Development schemes like BASIS PROMPT (Professional Register of Pest Technicians and Managers). It keeps them up to date with the latest developments and issues in the pest management industry."

BPCA Technical Manager Richard Moseley agrees, he says "The Association has created its own standard to ensure everyone has access to a pest control specification that will yield proper, professional pest control within any premises". Tony Baker agrees that the pest control industry should have a standard itself. If you don't have your own, "you can't dictate to other people what their standard should be", he says. He is very clear to tell his customers what he wants from them: "They are under no illusions: if they fail to follow a recommendation I have given to them, and I get called back out, they have to pay for the visit." It works, he says: "If they think they've got to pay for additional visits because they're not doing their job right, I guarantee you they get the work done."

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

### Further information

Alphakill [www.alphakill.co.uk](http://www.alphakill.co.uk)

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#### Standards

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

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

#### Pest Control in the Food Industry

(Chartered Institute of Environmental Health, 2009)

[www.cieh.org/policy/pest\\_control\\_food\\_industry.html](http://www.cieh.org/policy/pest_control_food_industry.html)



Jonathan Doyle is a freelance writer. He was editor of *The Retailer*, published by British Retail Consortium from 2008 to 2011.

Jonathan started his editorial career at the leading law publisher Lexis in the 1980s,

working on a wide variety of academic and professional legal titles. Jonathan's other current work includes book and journal design, typesetting and production.



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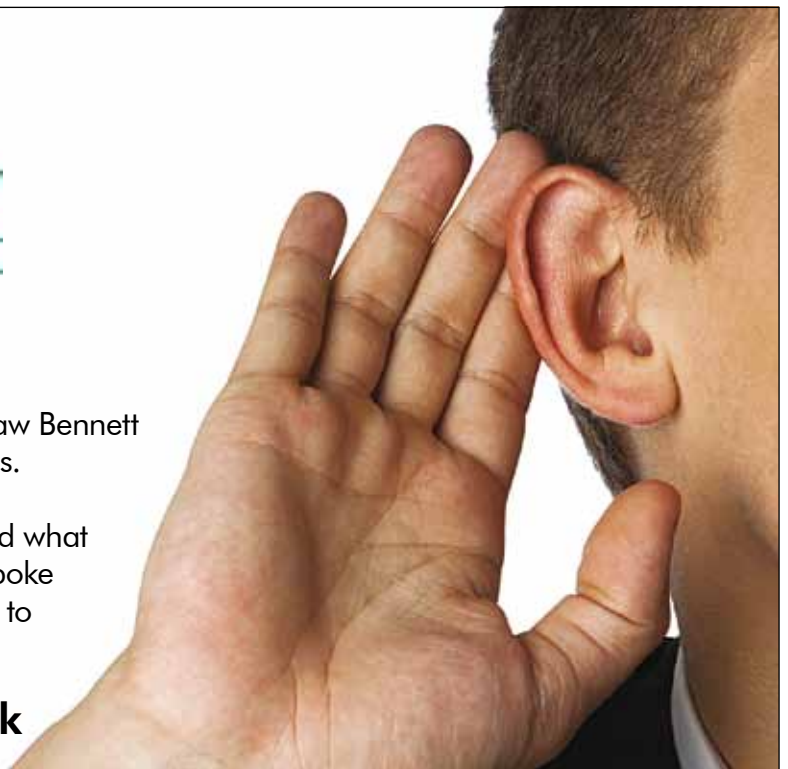
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# pulling together?



Every pest controller knows that pest eradication requires a united front. It is after all one of the fundamental principles of integrated pest management. But how good is the industry at actually practising what it preaches?

**Everyone working within pest control has the same public health goal, the prevention of the spread of disease through pests.**

**And yet some believe that parts of the industry are pulling in such opposite directions that it is losing sight of this key objective.**

**Stuart Spear investigates...**

At the heart of the problem appears to be a breakdown in relationships between pest controllers, auditors and some of the major supermarkets setting over-prescriptive pest control standards that many believe are fast becoming unworkable. There are concerns that unless the industry starts pulling in the same direction, the only winner will be the pest.

Dr John Simmons is a field biologist with many years of experience, working for the independent pest consultancy Acheta Consulting. A specialist in troubleshooting for clients in the food industry, he recognises the need for a high degree of control and regulation in terms of product usage but fears that things may now be going too far.

“Every week that goes by, the range of products and the way we are allowed to use them shrinks,” points out Dr Simmons. “If you then add an extra layer of complication in terms of clients imposing severe restrictions on what can be done, it ties one and a half hands behind our back. I would not like to be a pest control technician in some sites these days.”

He points to the severe restrictions in the routine use of toxic baits for monitoring and control in food production areas being insisted on by some retailers to illustrate his statement. Dr Simmons believes such tight restrictions act as an effective ban illustrating that those setting industry standards fail to understand how pest control works in reality.

He argues that with non-spill baits in locked, tamper-resistant boxes that have been bar coded and secured to the fabric of the building, and are being regularly checked, the risk is minimal. The public health risk posed by pests on the other hand is ever-present and he fears that some of the retailers now setting these highly prescriptive standards have lost sight of this fact.

“All these standards being set are aimed at food safety. The problem arises when restrictions on pest control become so restrictive, the balance between pest infestation and pest control tip



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

in favour of pest infestation, and I think we may be approaching that point,” says Dr Simmons.

George Houston, a Field Biologist and General Manager for Precision Pest

Management Solutions, agrees. He points to how some standards go further, forcing pest controllers to set non-toxic baits instead of trapping boxes.

“The issue of the use of trapping boxes as opposed to the use of non-toxic bait is a very big concern for us because it is just

poor pest control to use non-toxic bait as your primary method of detecting mice,” points out Houston. “It will detect them all right because the mice will take the non-toxic bait and disappear; all non-toxic bait is food. It is a nonsense.”

It is a concern that many in the industry share, suspecting that the problem of over prescriptive standards has arisen as a result of a sort of macho culture where food retailers want to prove that they have tougher standards than their competitors, and the need for those setting new standards to demonstrate they were tougher than the last.

In the past, attempts have been made to create a single pest control standard that would provide a consistent level of public health safety across the industry. The standard that came closest to achieving this was the Global Standard for Food Safety drawn up by the British Retail Consortium (BRC) through industry consultation in 1998. Today the standard has been adopted by 15,000 sites worldwide – 3,000 of which are in the UK.

The problem is that despite many of the food retailers participating in setting the BRC standard, major retailers like Tesco, Morrisons, Marks & Spencer, Asda and Sainsbury’s have forged ahead with their own standards. And as every pest controller knows, if you have a food manufacturer supplying a range of retailers you are going to have to abide by the toughest and most restrictive standard – regardless of what other retailers may require you to do.

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David Brackston is Technical Director Food at BRC Global Standards and chair of the working group for Issue 6, the most recent BRC global standard launched in January 2012. He acknowledges that one of the problems with creating such a universal standard is that it is difficult to meet the specific requirements of all of the individual food retailers.

“If Marks & Spencer or Tesco have their own requirements they will put them into their own code while our standard is based on best practice and risk assessment and so allows for more latitude to use a level of judgement rather than saying that all over the world pest control baits will be placed for instance at 20ft intervals around a warehouse,” explains Brackston.

The BRC believes that its latest standard has gone some way to allowing pest controllers more freedom to control pests. One of the most significant changes in Issue 6 is the requirement for BRC auditors to spend at least half of the audit time on the factory floor rather than focusing on procedure and form filling, which many claim has led to a tick box culture that fails to address the core issue of pest control.

This goes to the heart of another area of relationship breakdown within the industry; between the pest controller and the auditor.

The way this should work is that the pest controller, with the expertise, manages pest control while the auditor, responsible for overseeing pest control as part of far larger food safety audit, confirms the chosen methods are working.

According to BPCA chief executive Simon Forrester the reality is



“..often the pest controller will often do what the auditor recommends to comply with a standard, regardless of whether it is sensible in terms of pest eradication”

sometimes very different. “We are hearing that particularly larger companies are beholden to the paper trail to have someone to blame, and so rather than saying ‘pest controllers, you are the experts – tell us how we can improve’ it is all about people covering their backs,” explains Forrester. “There is a lot of suspicion amongst pest controllers as to why the auditor is there, and anecdotally I hear pest controllers expect auditors to find something wrong to demonstrate their value to the company.”

The result of this relationship breakdown is that the client and often the pest controller will often do what the auditor recommends to comply with a standard, regardless of whether it is sensible in terms of pest eradication. In the end the food

manufacturer needs compliance to keep the contract with the retailer and this can sometimes take precedence over effective pest management, points out Forrester.

Which is why BPCA has worked so closely with BRC in creating the new Issue 6 standard and why BRC auditors are required to spend half the audit on the factory floor.

Brackston believes the new standard is a big step away from tick box auditing: “It is a big change to expect auditors to spend more time looking for potential infestations and reviewing the practical implementation of rodent baits, their positioning and the proofing of the factory rather than just looking at procedures.”

The new standard has also changed its statement of intent or objective to ensuring that an effective pest control system is in place

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to minimise infestation. "This is now the guiding principle that all auditors have to embrace," points out Brackston.

When it comes to being left out of the audit process Houston believes that pest controllers sometimes have to take responsibility for failing to justify their actions.

"The problem is that the pest control industry needs to have more confidence and come back and defend itself better," points out Houston. "The whole thing is becoming too confrontational which is why the pest controller often just does what the auditor says. But they need to defend their actions and sometimes even walk away from a site if they are being asked to do something impossible in the hope that the client will ultimately see the error of their ways."

One of the auditing standards that encourages close working between clients pest controllers and auditors is the American Institute of Baking standard, used by mainstream food manufacturers globally. Under the AIB standard auditors are required to spend 80 per cent of their time physically inspecting the facility and are encouraged to make contact with the pest controller during the audit process.

Based on Integrated Pest Management (IPM), the AIB standard requires pest controller and client to risk assess premises by

physically walking around with a site map and also for clients to designate competent IPM-trained employees to carry out follow-up inspections.

While some elements of the AIB standard such as pesticide documentation and contracts are highly prescriptive Jeff Wilson, operations manager for Europe Africa and the Middle East for AIB, points out that due to much of the standard being based on risk assessment, the root cause of the problem is always the priority. "Our message is to keep asking 'why am I doing this?' and the answer has to be that you are doing it to keep pests out of the facility," explains Wilson.

But even where communication between client, pest controller and auditor is encouraged grey areas can still result. One of the criticisms associated with the AIB standard is that it requires toxic perimeter baiting, a controversial practice that exposes non-target animals to rodenticides. But according to Wilson this is a misunderstanding of the AIB standard.

"It is not true that we require that; it says in the standard 'based on a detailed facility survey', nowhere does it say we insist that we have external bait stations that contain toxic bait," explains Wilson.

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“We say that you have to do a detailed facility survey first which generally will mean a number of exterior monitoring devices installed at the recommendation of the pest control contractor. It is only if they then find activity in the monitoring devices and they know they have a problem and we would then expect them to escalate the number based on their findings, which comes back to integrated pest management being a proactive approach.”

What is clear is that lines of communication throughout the industry can sometimes break down. And according to Jonathan Peck, Group Chairman of Killgerm and member of the CIEH National Pest Advisory Panel, things may be about to get even more difficult as external baiting becomes more challenging.

Despite it looking as though the number of second-generation anticoagulant rodenticides (SGARs) that the Health and Safety Executive will allow to be used outside is to be increased from two to five, Peck believes that an industry compromise will end up with the HSE insisting that baits are restricted to within five metres of a building.

“Most rodent populations live more than five metres away from the building and so it will mean if a skip containing food is more than five metres from the building the pest controller will not be able to use rodenticide to control the rats feeding off the skip,” says Peck.

Another looming problem, points out Peck, is around new risk mitigation factors currently being drawn up by the HSE over the

use of SGARs as a permanent bait and where they can be placed: “The reason this is so significant is that if the auditors don’t realise that these are now applicable, they could mark a pest controller who is doing it correctly as not doing so, which will have a significant commercial effect on the work that they do,” says Peck.

“There is a major concern that there are auditors going around earning their money doing food audits who perhaps don’t realise the pressure the industry is now facing from the environmental lobby to get rid of permanent baiting where possible.”

As constraints on practice increase and standards harden maybe it is time for different elements of the industry to come together in the common cause of pest control. For if Dr Simmons is right and the industry is fast reaching a tipping point where pest control methods are seen as more of a risk than the pests themselves, then public health will ultimately be the casualty.



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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# Fly power!



Inspired by the Australian fly paper plant (*Drosera*) which catches flies to balance out a lack of nitrogen in the soil, design students James Auder and Jimmy Loizeau have developed a clock powered by flies.

Using two motors fly paper, a scraper and a microbial fuel cell, this clock gets its energy fully from flies. This prototype timepiece traps insects on flypaper stretched across its roller system before depositing them into a vat of bacteria. The ensuing chemical reaction, or 'digestion' is transformed into power, and this powers a small motor which runs both the rollers and the LCD clock.

James Auger said "When we started looking at nature, specifically carnivorous plants they had various methods for attracting flying insects and then capturing them – eventually consuming them to create energy. It's in those organisms that we looked to for inspiration."

The original designers of this peculiar method of turning flies into power came from the inventive minds working at the Bristol Robotics Laboratory who trialed this technology with their robot 'Ecobot II'. Prof Chris Melhuish Bristol Robotics Director said "we want robots to get their own energy from the environment, turning biomass into electricity." He added "In the future we will require autonomous robots to carry out work which we don't want to do which is boring, difficult or repetitive, in locations we don't want to be in at a time we can't be there. This means that some robots will need to be able to extract their energy from the environment that is being autonomous."

While it's not going to replace AA batteries, or run your PC just yet, the system requires only eight flies to power the clock for 12 days.

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- 4** Think about how your pest control specifications are having an impact on your contractors ability to protect your business from pests. Use the articles in this issue to help you rethink your strategy.
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