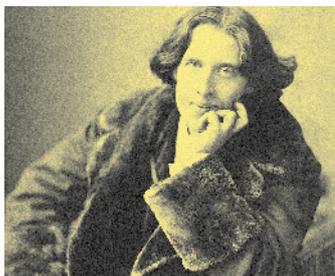


Bed bugs

Legacy of London 2012?

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Wilde about pests

Why is the hospitality industry ashamed of pest control?



Five star problem

How hospitality rating schemes work – or don't

Trouble on two wings

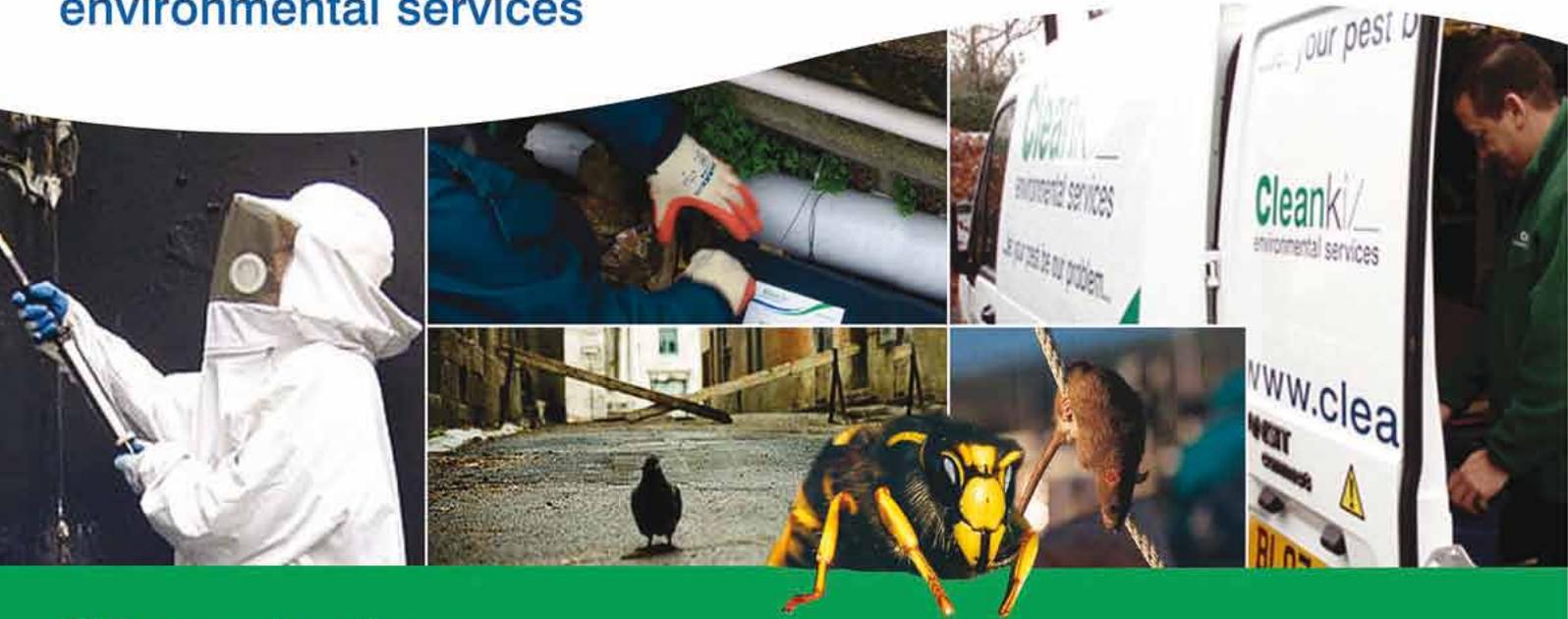
Tackling flying insect problems



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contents



16

CONTROL OF PESTS IN THE FOOD INDUSTRY

Keeping pests at bay - the latest guidance from the Chartered Institute of Environmental Health.



20

TROUBLE ON TWO WINGS

Get 'buzzy' dealing with this Summer's pest problem – flying insects.



30

BETTER, TOGETHER

Work with your pest controller to maximise the benefits to your business.

- 4 Editor's welcome: the hospitality MoT test**
BPCA chief executive, Simon Forrester looks at what's in store for you in this issue of **alexo**.
- 5 News**
Falcons over the Colosseum, Rate my Rat, Pest or Pesto, and more – the latest pest control news.
- 34 BPCA member directory**
Looking for a quality, expert pest management provider? The directory has the company you're looking for!
- 34 BPCA member market spot**
Spotlight on companies from the BPCA membership.
- 43 Final cuts**
Might pest controllers start leaving plants instead of bait boxes? The rat-eating plant that's the ultimate in green pest control, and a look forward to issue four.

Features this issue

- 10 London's 2012 legacy: bed bugs?**
This year sees several huge events bring tourists from across the globe to the UK – will they leave with bed bugs?
- 16 Control of pests in the food industry**
Food premises are particularly at risk from pests – the latest guidance shows you how to minimise your exposure.
- 20 Trouble on two wings: tackling flying insect problems**
Summertime brings a range of aerial pests into food premises, causing headaches. Out-think the flies with Clive Boase's article.
- 25 Five star problem**
Are restaurant hygiene ratings letting diners down?
- 28 The industry that dare not speak its name**
Proud of your pest control? Or do you treat it like an illicit affair?
- 30 Better, together**
More and more pest control companies are adding value for their clients – and improving their compliance rates – through pest awareness training.
- 31 Dealing with pests in hospitality**
The British Hospitality Association's pest awareness fact sheets – launched through BPCA and **alexo**.
- 32 Lights, camera, action!**
How pest control is hitting the limelight.
- 42 Pestered by pests?**
Some common misconceptions outlined by SitexOrbis.

alexo

British Pest Control Association
4a Mallard Way, Pride Park
Derby DE24 8GX

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alexo is printed on Tauro offset which is PEFC accredited stock, coming from managed and sustainable forests. It is whitened without chlorine and produced at an ISO 14001 certified mill.

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The hospitality MoT test



Welcome to our hospitality issue.

Like most people, I have my car serviced once a year, and do little else under the bonnet apart from top up the screenwash. At the last MoT I got talking to the chap behind the desk while I waited. He said that from experience he can usually tell an MoT fail as soon as it drives in. They tend to look unloved, unwashed, and haven't seen a mechanic from one MoT to the next.

That got me thinking; it's the same for pest control. If you don't employ an expert or, worse still, you don't listen to them, it's likely you'll get an 'MoT fail' – but the consequences are much more serious than a replacement wiper blade or a re-test fee.

“ Go to the States and properties proudly display their pest management contract credentials, but here we shy away. ”

If your business treats your pest control as an unwanted overhead to be suffered, rather than a warranty against an EHO visit, you might be heading for problems. It's vital to work with your contractor and use their expertise. Most pest controllers are happy to help your staff act as their eyes and ears, and will train them to spot signs of pest activity. This will help nip problems 'in the bud' – a fact several of this issue's articles bear out.

I tend to look for star rating when booking accommodation, or choosing somewhere for dinner. It's an easy guide to the relative standard of a property. But the majority of star ratings schemes don't include anything about pest control, so we asked the question – is this right? The FSA's new Food Hygiene Rating Scheme is

moving in the right direction but isn't, I feel, there yet. Maybe it's that old chestnut that in the UK we're frightened to talk about pests. Go to the States and properties proudly display their pest management contract credentials, but here we shy away. British reticence and squeamishness are the two main problems. I'd like to see someone proud to declare they're pest-protected – maybe your next USP marketing tool? After all, this year sees a massive influx of visitors to the UK for both the 2012 games and also the Queen's Jubilee. Many of them will come from cultures where pest control is a given, and they may be partly basing their buying decision on the likelihood of leaving with bites – or worse. If your business is willing to stand up and be counted, get in touch – we'd love to hear from you.

Simon Forrester
BPCA chief executive
simon@bpca.org.uk

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www.bpca.org.uk



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One in five encounter pest problems in hospitality sector

Almost one in five hospitality businesses have encountered a pest problem in the past year, with a lack of effective cleaning and maintenance cited as the main cause for attracting rats, mice and ants.

The research, conducted by Rentokil, reveals that 86% of business owners surveyed stated the key concern is the damage a pest infestation could cause to their reputation, followed closely by customer relationships and loss of trading (82%). Of the 500 SME businesses surveyed, the majority see their reputation as their greatest asset, and understand the damage a pest infestation can cause.

80% of business owners believed poor cleaning and maintenance can attract pests to premises, while keeping waste in rubbish bins (73%) and having a communal kitchen (57%) were other contributing factors. The survey also revealed that the vast majority of hospitality businesses (84%) have invested in a pest strategy – almost double the survey average of 40%.

Savvas Othon, technical director at Rentokil said “What this research shows is that businesses do understand the key causes of pest problems but need to act proactively and consistently to minimise these risks. It’s promising to see that so many businesses in this sector have invested in a pest control strategy.”

“One of the first key steps, is to ensure you engage with staff effectively so they fully understand their role in reducing the threat of pests at work to create a better, healthy work environment – for both customers and colleagues.”

65% of the businesses surveyed reported mice (36%) and rats (29%) on their premises, while 21% experienced ant infestations.

www.rentokil.co.uk

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This month BPCA will meet **alexo** readers at the Facilities Show (NEC Birmingham, 15-17 May), and on the last day BPCA will be hosting a free seminar on how to select and manage your pest control contract. Almost 18,000 visitors attended last year. BPCA will exhibit alongside member companies SitexOrbis, Mitie, and NBC Bird and Pest Solutions. If you’re popping along to the show, come and see us on stand W4. www.facilitiesshow.com

Baroness Boothroyd’s pest problem

Over the Christmas period, BBC Radio Four listeners heard from guest editor Baroness Betty Boothroyd, who invited BPCA Board member Jenny Humphrey from DRE Pest Control to visit her Cambridge home and talk about her ongoing problems with deer, moles and rabbits. Jenny said “Baroness Boothroyd was brilliant, and I was able to give her some great food for thought on how to control her pest problems.”

<http://goo.gl/3Gai1>

www.drepestcontrolcambridge.co.uk



TIME

Bed bugs named Time magazine’s most ‘Evil Animal’

Time magazine recently listed the Top Ten Evil Animals and many readers will agree with their choice for number one: bed bugs. The Time article noted that infestations have been reported in all 50 US states, and in the latter part of 2010, they were at nearly epidemic proportions in New York City and other metropolises.

In explaining the ‘evilness’ of bed bugs, the article noted that “despite their small size, their anatomy is custom-built for bloodsucking. The apple seed-size insect can drink more than three times its body weight in blood in a single feeding.”

<http://ti.me/zUFWMV>



Pest or pesto?

In this world of smartphones, one quick-thinking member of the public can easily destroy a premises’ reputation with the click of a button.

The BPCA office was recently sent this picture of a cheeky mouse, which made an appearance at an Italian deli counter in London. Mouse-zarella roll, anyone?

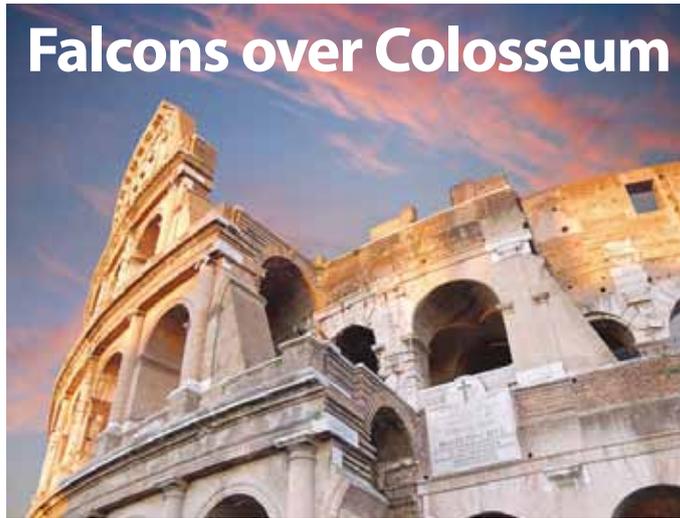
www.bPCA.org.uk

Falcons are to be introduced in the skies over the ancient Roman Colosseum in a bid to scare away birds destroying the 2,000-year-old stone facade.

Gulls, ravens and blackbirds are thought to have been the cause of several recent incidents at the iconic arena where masonry has fallen away, narrowly missing passers-by and tourists.

Officials are in talks with several pest control firms to bring in the falcons, which are seen as the most effective way to reduce the numbers of birds which nest in the nooks and crannies of the Colosseum.

Rossella Rea, director of the Anfiteatro Flavio (to give the Colosseum its proper name) said "In previous years the problem was just pigeons and their excrement damaging the stone.



Now we have a problem with seagulls, ravens and crows that peck away at the facade with their beaks, and the best way to control these birds and keep them away is with falcons. The birds peck at cracks to hide away seeds, and this combined with the weeds that grow as a result loosen the stone causing it to

crumble and fall away.

"We were able to deal with the pigeons by installing the classic spikes to protect tourists as they walked through the monument, but now we have ravens and crows – it's like something out of a Hitchcock film."

The site recently tried to limit access to food sources by

replacing its rubbish bins with ones that had special covers over the top so that the birds could not get at the food inside.

Umberto Broccoli, Rome council's superintendent of the city's multitude of artistic works, said: "Our monuments have two main enemies: climbing plants and birds. It's a very serious problem and the solution is not always simple, as we cannot simply shoot them." Rome's daily newspaper Il Messaggero suggested another possible remedy was the use of scarecrows, even suggesting they could be 'dressed as gladiators'. Falcons as a control method are seen not only as environmentally friendly, but appropriate in a wide range of sites from well known tourist areas to waste depots.



BPCA DEVELOPS GUIDANCE WITH BRC

If your company is part of the retail supply chain, you'll have heard of the new version of the British Retail Consortium (BRC) Global Food Safety Standard that came into force in January. The pest control section has been amended with BPCA's guidance. The Association is committed to working closely with specifiers to bring clarity and common sense to specifications, and the guidance document produced by BPCA for our members is a perfect example of this in action. David Brackston, Technical Director of Food Schemes at BRC, reviewed and approved the BPCA Guidance for BRC.

BPCA and BRC are aligned on the issue of competence to practice as a pest controller. BRC states that pest control operators should be trained and licensed to handle pest control products, and 'experts' (as defined in Issue 6) would normally be expected to be more senior in terms of experience/knowledge than the regular service personnel, as the objective is to provide a more in-depth inspection service and review the existing pest control measures.

Food manufacturing specifications often task suppliers with pest awareness training or to install bird proofing measures, areas where BPCA members can assist. Similarly, pest control companies should have proper procedures in place to ensure they meet the specification, and ultimately avoid non-compliances when you as client are audited. A simple way to meet these criteria is to look for the BPCA logo.

www.bPCA.org.uk/news.html www.brcglobalstandards.com



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Spain and Portugal have verified a 70% increase in requests for bed bug control services during the past five years, says a report from ANECPLA, BPCA's sister federation in Spain. Bed bugs were eradicated from Spain half a century ago but, as in many other developed countries, there has been a rapid resurgence in recent times.

According to Milagros Fernández de Lezeta, ANECPLA's General Manager, "Bed bugs have turned out to be difficult to eradicate. It is important that society has all the available information to detect and prevent their spread. Therefore, all parties involved – premises managers, service companies and health authorities – must work together."

According to the new research, 80% of pest control companies have carried out services related to bed bug eradication in the previous five years, with most called in after an infestation has taken significant hold. The other main reasons for calling in pest controllers were following client

complaints and for preventive reasons. Almost half (45%) of clients do not contract for routine check-ups after pest control procedures, with a similar proportion in Spain employing preventive measures after the bed bugs have been controlled, but in Portugal only 15% take any preventative action.

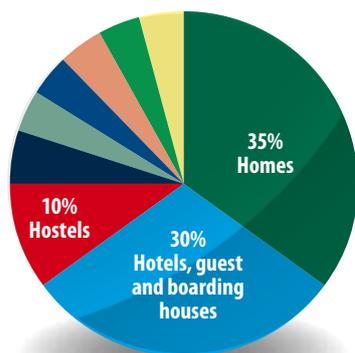
Bed bugs are present in most of Spain but especially in tourist areas. The primary cause is thought to be an increase in travel and tourism, followed by contaminated luggage and transport of goods, the absence of regular inspections for pests, the denial of incidents and the lack of notifications, as well as resistance to insecticides or the inadequate insecticide use.

Milagros continued "Over recent years, milder winters have allowed shorter reproductive cycles which, added to increases in the movement of people and goods, has favoured the spread of new pests which we must confront to avoid possible health risks."

www.expocida.com

SOURCES OF INFESTATION

- 5% Catering establishments
- <4% Old people's homes
- <4% Public transport
- <4% Schools and nurseries
- <4% Universities
- <4% Leisure centres (bowling alleys, cinemas)



Rate my rat



New York subway riders who take the best photos of the nastiest rats can win a monthly transport pass and \$500, according to the city's media.

The Rate my Rat contest has been put on by angry members of subway

workers' union Transport Workers, which alleges that a rat infestation is making their workplace, platforms and rail lines dangerous. Commuters can upload their photos to www.ratfreesubways.com

"Who the hell wants to work around hundreds of freaking rats?" union member Jim Gannon told media.

The union is targeting the Metropolitan Transportation Authority to clean stations more often and generally improve maintenance of the platforms and other structures.

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Check your netting now, before it's too late!

Property managers are being urged to check their pigeon netting now before the 'flying rats' start re-infesting.

Paul Bates, Managing Director of Cleankill Environmental Services, says poorly maintained netting can lead to birds getting tangled up and damaging the netting further – as well as other problems such as retrieving the birds safely and the stress caused to the animals themselves, which may leave building owners open to a prosecution under the Animal Welfare Act.

“Ideally you should choose a pest control company that offers an installation service with an inspection contract. This means that it is the pest control company’s responsibility to regularly check the netting hasn’t been damaged and make necessary repairs, minimising headaches for you. Also check that any companies you ask to quote have insurance, health and safety procedures in place and are members of the British Pest Control Association,” stresses Paul.

In April and May pigeons will start taking advantage of the warmer weather to sit on outside ledges and pipe work. Their droppings then fall to the floor below, creating a dangerously slippery surface. Pest controllers can use a variety of techniques to discourage the birds from landing on buildings including installing nets, sprung wire or spike systems, and even chemical gels.

Paul added: “With pigeons now breeding four or five times a year, compared to two or three times 20 years ago, their numbers are increasing dramatically. The problem is exacerbated by accessible food sources and people feeding them, which attracts them into town squares where they foul pavements and buildings. If a gap in the netting goes unnoticed and a pair of pigeons gets through and into a roof space, in a matter of months there can be hundreds of birds living there and the floor will soon be covered with fouling up to a foot deep.”

Pigeons are the most unhygienic and messy birds, and actually carry more diseases than rats. They nest on their excrement and attract mites. Nearly all pigeons carry the bird mite - a tiny insect that feeds off the bird and makes humans itch and scratch. Pigeon fouling and nest materials also provide a home for many other insects such as clothes moths, carpet beetle and mealworm beetles. Dry pigeon droppings (guano) create airborne bacteria affecting anybody that may be susceptible to asthma and other breathing difficulties. John Dickson of NBC Bird & Pest Solutions says “With diseases such as Cryptococcosis and Histoplasmosis, which has been known to be fatal in rare cases, guano is especially a risk around air conditioning and rooftop plant machinery. Guano needs to be removed and the area sanitised by a trained professional who will take the necessary precautions to avoid inhalation or contact with the guano.” When selecting your pest controller, consider selecting a registered waste carrier, who can carry out full-scale removal of bird fouling as well as contaminated goods and furniture from infested properties.



www.cleankill.co.uk

www.nbcbirdandpest.co.uk

FIVE PIGEON FACTS

- 1 Young pigeons (squabs) remain in their nests for up to two months, which is why it is often only pest controllers who get to see them.
- 2 Pigeons can see in colour and also ultra-violet light – a part of the light spectrum that humans cannot see. Pest controllers sometimes use deterrent UV gels which look like fire to the birds.
- 3 Pigeons spread a variety of nasty diseases including salmonella and psittacosis (a flu-like illness that can cause death in vulnerable people). Environmental Health may quote food hygiene regulations if infestations cause problems in alfresco dining areas.
- 4 In the 16th century pigeon waste was a highly valued source of saltpetre (potassium nitrate) – a main ingredient of gunpowder, and also used to fertilise vineyards. Nowadays it's a major cause of damage to metal and stonework on buildings.
- 5 A pigeon's eyes work better with stationary images, so they bob their heads for depth perception, because their side-mounted eyes give monocular vision.

MINIMISE PIGEON PROBLEMS

- Do not leave food out for birds or other wildlife, clean up open-air tables immediately after use, and ensure waste food is kept out of reach.
- Block off gaps which pigeons can perch on or hop through (e.g. replace slates, block under eaves, have nets/spikes installed). Pigeons can gain access via a 20mm diameter hole!
- Identify problem areas and install pigeon proofing, seeking advice from a professional if a nest or eggs are present.
- Scare the pigeons away using falconry response, audio or electric pigeon deterrents.
- Be persistent. None of these measures is likely to be 100% effective – they will, however help to limit the worst effects of the problem.

BPCA launches National Survey of Pests

This month sees the launch of the British Pest Control Association National Survey 2012 – the first of its kind. The research was carried out on every UK local authority and district council, asking detailed questions to build up a full picture of pest hotspots, areas where the recession is impacting on public health pest control, and set a benchmark for future research.

BPCA Chief Executive Simon Forrester said “This is a rigorous survey of every local authority throughout the UK. With a 100% response rate, coupled with a wide range of pest species covered, the study

is the only comprehensive analysis of UK pests. The survey also gives detailed ratings for every local authority, so it’s easy to see how each borough, region or district compares across a range of key performance indicators.”

Information is broken down by area and head of population, and the full report allows further analysis. The plan is to repeat the survey annually, to build up a picture of how the landscape of public health pest control is changing.

The research is launched on Friday 18 May. If you want to see how your council compares, check out the key findings on

The survey shows...

- The best (and worst) areas for a variety of pests, including bed bugs, rats, mice, wasps, cockroaches and birds
- The London borough with the most concentrated pest problem in England.
- The ‘hardest working man in pest control’
- The ‘wasp capital of Britain’
- The busiest and most efficient local authority pest control teams – and the least!
- The local authority with the UK’s worst bed bug problem, with almost 10 call-outs annually per 1,000 population
- And much, much more!

the BPCA website, where we’ll be listing the top (and bottom) twenty in each area (PDF available). Copies of the full 400-page research report (priced £95 plus VAT) covering 393 separate UK authorities are available to order from BPCA.

www.bpca.org.uk



team of international experts spread 48 tonnes of bait donated by Bell Laboratories over 128 square kilometres.

Having shown the methodology and technology is effective, phase two gets underway in 2013. At 80,000 hectares in size, South Georgia is more than seven times larger than Campbell Island in New Zealand, the largest island ever cleared of rodents.

Explaining the government’s support of this important environmental initiative on this southernmost UK Overseas Protected Territory, Minister for the Natural Environment and Fisheries Richard Benyon said: “I’ve been captivated by South Georgia, ever since reading of the plight of Sir Ernest Shackleton as a child. With the centenary of this famous expedition just around the corner, we have a once in a lifetime chance to help return this precious habitat to an even better state than that in which Shackleton would have first discovered it. I’m delighted that the UK Government has been able to offer its support to this valuable work and hope that others may be encouraged to do the same.”

Speaking about the funding announcement, Howard Pearce, the Chairman of Trustees of the South Georgia Heritage Trust said, “The Trust is delighted with this generous grant from Defra, which gives a tremendous boost to our campaign to eradicate invasive rodents from South Georgia. The impact of the project, once completed, will be spectacular. Our vision is to return South Georgia to the pristine state in which Captain Cook discovered it in 1775.”

www.belllabs.com

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Photo credit: Tony Martin



Following on from an article in **alexo** issue one, we have received confirmation that the South Georgia Heritage Trust is to receive £250,000 funding from Defra in support of its Habitat Restoration Project – the largest rat eradication project anywhere in the world, designed to restore this unique South Atlantic island’s fragile ecology and wildlife which is threatened by millions of invasive rodents. The seabird sanctuary on the sub-Antarctic island has been plagued by rats since they arrived as stowaways on sealing and whaling ships.

Following years of planning, a highly successful pilot phase of the project was conducted in 2011, which witnessed the successful removal of rats from a tenth of the total infected area using helicopter bait drops. After years of preparation, but in just 26 days, an 11-strong

London's 2012 legacy: bed bugs?

BED BUG
FOUNDATION



This year sees the world's biggest sporting event come to London for the third time. With it comes a huge ingress of people from every corner of the planet. However, will they leave with more than souvenirs, empty wallets and the odd medal?

Experts claim bed bugs pose the greatest potential threat to the UK hospitality industry, but what is the direct effect on a business, and what can be done to counteract it? Richard Naylor and Oliver Madge from the Bed Bug Foundation explain...

Bed bugs have had a long association with humans and are among the most hated of household insects. Until the 1930s bed bug infestations were widespread, eradication was difficult and control products were often as risky to people as they were to the pests themselves. In the early 1930s a Royal Commission on bed bugs was established, whose report stated that in some areas of London 100% of homes were infested.

The reprieve from these sleep-depriving parasites came mainly as a result of the availability of potent residual pesticides and changes in legislation. However over the last decade resistance to the main classes of insecticide has fuelled a bed bug resurgence, and European legislative attitudes are heading towards more sustainable approaches to pest management. Controlling these pests will therefore become more difficult over the next few years.

Bed bugs are most successful in densely populated areas, such as major cities. They thrive in multi-occupancy buildings, where they can freely move around and where coordinating access for control efforts is often impossible. Therefore, the scale of the resurgence is hard to measure. The number of phone calls about bed bugs received by London local authorities between 2000 and 2006 provides some of the best evidence available, suggesting a 28.5% year-on-year increase in bed bug infestations (London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine). Some suggest that this figure may now be higher, but reliable data is scarce.

Bed bugs are not restricted to the typical bedroom environments. Activity has been reported recently in some surprising places including airports, cinemas, offices, retail sites, even on public transport. As such this pest is being redefined as an 'exposure pest', which means that anyone can pick one up.

With the global spread of resistant bed bugs being attributed (in part) to increased air travel, and highly populated cities and buildings being the primary source of local infestations, our attention must be turned to this year's Olympics in London, along with other UK host cities in particular. The problem is not that guests will bring bed bugs, but rather that they may encounter

them here, and take them away as an unwanted souvenir. This was evident at the recent Winter Olympics in Vancouver. As Stephen Doggett, author of the Australian Code of Practice said, "Bed bugs are an international problem and will require an international effort to be overcome."

The costs associated with bed bug infestations to date have not been accurately recorded - it is almost impossible to do so. This lack of information means that the overall economic impact to individual businesses and the community at large is difficult to calculate. Similarly, establishing liability for infestation is problematic, and can cause issues with insurances.

The hospitality industry is starting to realise that bed bugs can hurt them financially. Research has shown that rooms are being closed, often for extended periods resulting in lost revenue, and with knock-on effects on insurance premiums. Rooms are being continuously and unsuccessfully sprayed with insecticides, and furniture is being destroyed (both deliberately and accidentally) in an attempt to prevent re-infestation.

A 2005 study in Australia showed the costs of an infestation in a tertiary care home to include: replacement of bedding and linen (>£4,750), treatments (approx. £21,000), control equipment (>£660) and intellectual support (>£1,300). The total of around £27,700 equated to £407/room, although many costs were not included such as the negative media interest and loss of goodwill.

In London, it has been reported that one hotel currently has an infestation rate of around 40% of rooms. Another hotel's operational procedure for controlling infestations was to close the infested room and the four surrounding it, for five days. Cost of treatments: £1,200, and lost revenue £5,000 – per infestation!

It is unlikely that these costs would be representative across the entire accommodation industry. For example, some providers increasingly try to undertake the control options themselves and often do not close rooms for treatments, thus having considerably lower costs. In these cases it is

WHAT IS A BED BUG?



Bed bugs (*Cimex lectularius*) are small parasitic insects that feed solely on blood. The adult females lay eggs, which they glue on to hard surfaces. The eggs hatch into nymphs, which moult (shed their skins) five times before becoming full sized adults.

Adult bed bugs are around 5-6mm in length (unfed) and reddish-brown in colour, rather like an apple pip. As they feed their bodies becomes swollen and distended. Bed bugs typically feed when their host is asleep, biting on exposed skin such as the face, neck, arms and legs. Bed bugs are not known to transmit any diseases to humans. The bite itself is relatively painless, but the injected salivary fluid is responsible for considerable, localised reactions, although individuals may differ in their sensitivity and reaction times.

important to ensure the pesticides are applied at the correct dose and by trained operatives, and residues are fully dry before allowing use of the room.

There is an important management concept to understand with bed bugs. Lost revenue from closed rooms due to infestations and compensation to bitten guests affects both the financial top and bottom lines. It's a bigger bug than many people think. But for those who think they can 'comp' their way out of trouble by giving what amounts to hush money to affected clients, think again. The shift to a compensation culture means some guests may see a bed bug bite as a reason to call in their lawyers, tying up valuable resources in managing both the case and negative publicity.

/continued over...

1327
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Increases in litigation are further adding to the fixed cost of controlling infestations. Cases in America have reported significant out-of-court settlements where the accommodation provider cannot show due diligence in managing infestations.

Often hotels use the guest as their monitor and only act to control an infestation when someone has been bitten. Not only is this not good for business, it can quickly spread via social media or review sites such as TripAdvisor, and is an attractive and persistent story for journalists.

There seems to be reluctance from many stakeholders to really address the root cause and implement proactive systems. Many businesses are simply waiting for the infestation to occur and then dealing

with it, but this can be a false economy. The advice from BPCA is to establish internal systems (such as linen management, front-line staff training and regular internal monitoring), and then call in experts where appropriate.

Unfortunately the problem can be compounded by pest control operators that do not fully understand the risks that bed bugs may deliver to an accommodation provider. Bed bugs are often considered to be 'just another' bug and often treated as such, thus contributing to their growing population levels. Bed bugs are dissimilar to fleas or cockroaches and as such the approach to controlling infestations must also be different.

Operatives should be trained to deal with bed bugs as a pest, and similarly heat or cold treatment companies must be able to demonstrate competence to treat furniture etc. before being let loose, as either may end up causing damage to your property. BPCA and the wider industry have set up training courses to ensure adequate knowledge is available.

The degree of this pest's resurgence and the ultimate economic impact, combined with a general misunderstanding of the target species, led to the development of best practice and the launch of the first European Code of Practice (ECoP) for the control and management of bed bugs. The

aim of the ECoP was to provide a reference document, which would be a guide for pest controllers, the accommodation industry and other affected stakeholders, as well as the prevention and management of potential infestations. The expected outcome from adherence to the ECoP would be to minimise the impact of bed bug infestations wherever they occurred, and to limit risk of exposure where possible.

Since its launch just last year in 2011, methods and available tools have significantly progressed, and Version 2 (ECoPv2) of the European Code has just got underway, supported by BPCA and 16 other pest management associations across Europe.

The pest management industry, in association with various stakeholders from around the globe are pulling together to ensure that ECoPv2 delivers as broad a set of practices as possible. Now is also the time and opportunity to become involved if your business is potentially threatened by bed bug infestations. The ECoP is available free of charge to all stakeholders.

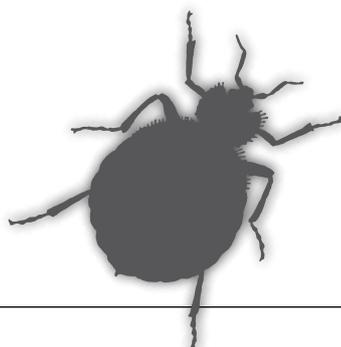
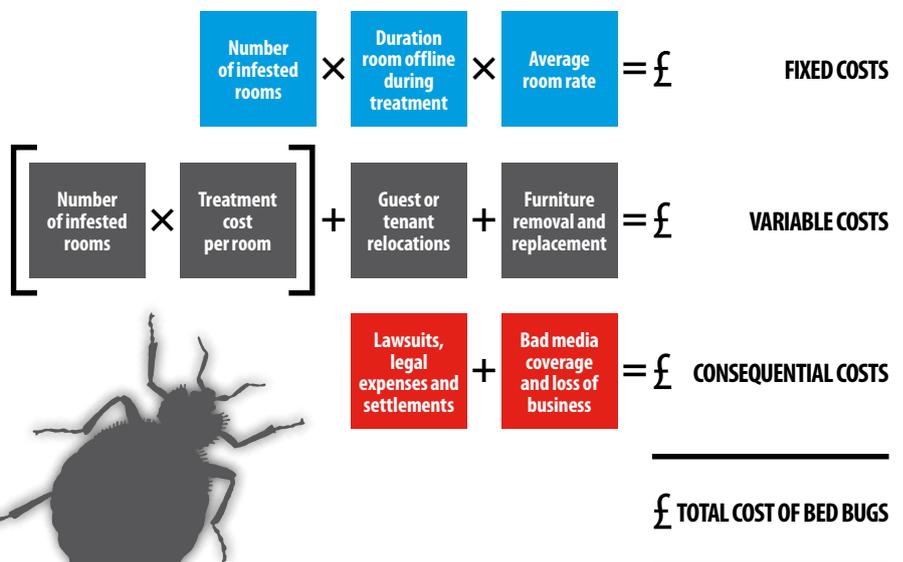
Nobody wants 2012 to be known as the 'bed bug games'. Every accommodation provider needs to consider their own individual strategy for coping with this most media-friendly and persistent pest.

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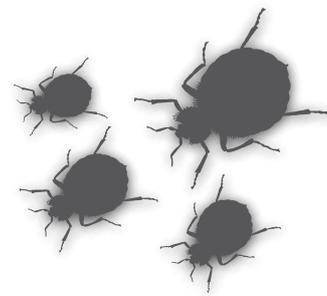
Counting the cost of bed bug infestations

The financial cost of a bed bug infestation goes far beyond the treatment fees. This matrix could help to identify how much a bed bug infestation could really cost your business.

The risk to a business is really based on all the above costs, but the unknown and potentially largest cost is the loss of goodwill. Creating a benchmark or risk rating is a suitable approach to managing potential activity. Consideration should be given to escalation processes in the event of an infestation, and also when and how to reduce the service back to normal.



Five things to consider



1 Frontline staff

It is often hotel reception that receives the first enquiry following an alleged infestation; how they handle that situation can be key to either pacifying the guest (by providing suitable and reassuring information) or spreading the infestation if the guest is simply relocated to a new room. These complaints also often occur at night, when senior managers or trained staff may not be present.

It is highly recommended that maintenance and housekeeping / management are properly trained to identify bed bugs and their common hiding places. It is these staff who repeatedly visit the rooms and they are a perfect first-line monitoring tool. While every check may add time to a room clean, the benefits are clear.

2 Establish your programme

The most effective strategy is vigilance: proactively look for and monitor signs of bed bugs. Early detection will allow infestations to be controlled quicker, usually with minimal need for pesticides and with a lower chance of people being bitten and thus reducing any consequential risk.

Achieve best results from a programme encompassing careful linen handling procedures, regular inspection, monitoring, and ultimately treatment including the careful use of insecticides. Monitoring and early detection are vital to bed bug management programmes, but use of trained personnel (employees or contractors) is key. If a pest controller is used, they will understand and be able to train your staff in how monitoring devices contribute towards a successful eradication programme.

3 Call experts when needed

Integrated Pest Management (IPM) is an holistic approach and involves consideration of all the available control options. There is no silver bullet for eliminating bed bug infestations; they present a challenge to modern pest management that the industry is still struggling to meet. As such it is important not to be reliant on one method of control – and this is not about spraying two different pesticides. Additional tools must be involved and must be comprehensively and diligently utilised.

Scent detection dogs can be used to identify the presence and extent of infestations, either before or after treatment. One of the key benefits is that dogs can quickly carry out detection that would take a human many hours, however dogs can have bad days as well as humans so they have limitations. Again, ensure your supplier (and their dogs) are properly trained. Take up references from previous clients.

4 Understand the methods of treatment

Laundrying, cleaning and tidying are very important parts of any control programme, and caution needs to be exercised to minimise the risk of spreading an infestation. Where possible, all soft furnishings in the vicinity of the bed, including bedding and clothing, should be washed on a hot cycle (at least 55°C) and/or tumble-dried on a hot setting for at least 30 minutes. Removing any fecal spots left behind on furniture will help with monitoring treatment success, as well as aiding future early detection. Tidying up and removing clutter from the vicinity of the bed can aid early detection and simplify future treatments. However, if a cluttered room is already infested, care should be taken not to disturb and potentially disperse existing bed bug harbourages, which could complicate the treatment process.

Vacuuming can significantly reduce population numbers, but should not be relied upon to eradicate an infestation. Importantly, after cleaning it is essential

that the bag is disposed of and the vacuum unit itself isolated.

Steam and cold gases (e.g. carbon dioxide) are effective at killing eggs as well as live stages, however they rely on good access to all harbourages. Miss any and the process will need to start all over again, since there are no residual effects.

Ambient heat treatments elevate the temperature of the room to around 60°C. This is sufficient to kill all bed bug life stages. These treatments can be effective if all areas of the room reach the critical temperature. However this is not always achieved, and poorly trained technicians may damage property – always check insurances cover their work. As above, there are no residual effects.

Some companies will recommend throwing away furniture and belongings, which is often unnecessary and wasteful. Decontamination units can be used to treat infested items. Mattress and bed-frame encasements can save a heavily infested bed from being discarded.

5 Know your pest controller!

External contractors should ideally hold a relevant qualification and be able to demonstrate competence and success in eradicating (and more importantly managing) infestations. Ask about their previous bed bug experience and check they are a BPCA member.

Pest controllers should use a combination of tactics to control bed bug infestations. They should provide information and instructions for onsite staff as well as reports detailing any treatment carried out and the chemicals (if any) used. Caution should be raised if only one method of control (insecticides) is recommended; due to the complexity of bed bug infestations no single method is 100% effective. Thoroughness and communication between client and contractor are the keys to eradication.

Not a lot of people know that...

- Adult female bed bugs lay around five eggs per day
- Bed bug eggs are approximately 1.2 mm in length, translucent and are impervious to most pesticides
- Bed bug eggs hatch in 5-10 days depending on the temperature of the room
- Bed bugs require a feed to develop between each of the five nymphal stages
- Bed bugs usually feed every five days, although it may be less frequent at lower temperatures
- Reactions to bites can take up to ten days to develop and some people don't react at all
- Bed bugs can live for many months without feeding

“Thoroughness and communication between client and contractor are the keys to eradication...”



Richard Naylor has been working on the common bed bug for more than 10 years. With the rise in prominence of bed bugs the focus of his research shifted towards their ecology and dispersal, with a view to informing control strategies. Active dispersal between flats is an important factor in bed bug spread through multiple occupancy dwellings. However very little is known about when and why they disperse. Opportunities for field studies are limited, so Richard has developed laboratory setups for study.



Oliver Madge has been working in the pest industry for over 20 years, starting as a service technician controlling pests and progressing through the technical safety management route. Promotion to Operations Manager in Central London provided his first exposure to the risk of bed bugs in high occupancy environments. Since then he has noted the gradual rise in infestations. Oliver is Chief Operating Officer for the Bed Bug Foundation, a charity that raises awareness, increases communications and delivers education to increase the standard of pest management.

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REMEMBER!

In-depth
pest control
company
directory
from page 34

We all know that pests and food pose a serious health risk. We also know that strict food hygiene laws carry heavy fines for pest infestations. But how many of us know just how dangerous pests can really be and whether we are doing everything possible to keep them out of our food premises? Stuart Spear investigates.

When it comes to pests and food there is little margin for error. Zero tolerance is the name of the game. Pathogens which have spread from a pest's gut or skin onto food or a work surface can not only cause serious illness, but also costly food wastage, potential loss of reputation, low staff morale and ultimately closure.

Which explains why food inspectors are so concerned about infestations. A quick glance at the pathogens spread by rodents alone drives home why pest control is such a serious business: Salmonella, Listeria, E.coli, Cryptosporidium, Leptospirosis and Toxoplasmosis.

To help avoid the spread of such life-threatening diseases, the Chartered Institute of Environmental Health has published guidance on pests aimed specifically at the food sector. Pest control procedures in the food industry starts by explaining the law and then the principles behind sound pest management. But the guts of the guidance, written by BPCA life member John Charlton, aims to explain the behaviour of pests that most commonly plague the food industry. Adrian Gough is Managing Director of AG Pest Management. He says "I have used extracts from the document in providing pest control awareness training to key personnel within many of the food sites that our company provides a service to, and also for in-house training. We have implemented many parts of the document within our pest prevention folder resulting in great feedback from food industry auditors, and we always say 'happy auditor' results in 'happy client'."

On 1 January 2005 a major event changed the pest industry forever. Until then Methyl Bromide had been utilised to manage pests. Applied in the food industry to control insects in raw materials, it could kill 99% of an infestation in 24 hours. Unfortunately this colourless and odourless wonder gas was also a major ozone depleter, and so a phase out that started in 1993 led to a 100% ban 12 years later.

Control of pests in the food industry

In its place the pest industry turned to integrated pest management, a far more environmentally friendly way to control pests. This systematic approach to pest control relies on good housekeeping practices, inspections and monitoring along with physical control methods, chemical controls and habitat and environment management. In short, it relies on the active involvement and knowledge of the pest control professional and those working in the food industry. Key to this approach is knowing your enemy, and early detection.

Rodent droppings are often the first sign of a mouse or rat infestation. Size and texture will tell you what type of infestation you have and how recent. Rats produce 40 droppings a day, mice about 80. Rat droppings are about 10mm long, whereas those from mice are 4mm and thinner. Smears on surfaces and floors are another giveaway, created by greasy fur deposits when in regular contact.

"Rats and mice are creatures of habit and always follow the same route (as a predator avoidance technique) by keeping their body close to a wall. Anywhere they go over a surface you will get grease off their fur," explains Charlton, a former technical director with Rentokil Pest Control who now runs his own consultancy.

Rodents gnaw things to keep their continuously-growing incisors worn down and sharp. So freshly gnawed wood, along with damaged food goods are another tell-tale sign, as are shredded paper and labels often used for nesting by mice.

According to Charlton it is important in the case of a rat infestation to not clear a site before treatment, due to rats being neophobic (i.e. fearful of anything new in their environment). "Leave things where they are and get rid of the rats, then clear it up, otherwise you risk spreading them around."

Cockroaches eat most foodstuffs, including each other. They are at their most active at night, spending their days grouped together in harbourages (their 'homes') and sending out scent messages through their faeces for others of their species to join them. The food poisoning risk from cockroaches comes from them indiscriminately moving from filth to food carrying pathogens as they go. Cockroaches also regurgitate their food and taint materials with their characteristic smell. Infested premises may also have excrement and fragments of their exoskeleton in the air. Cockroaches can often be found where pipes pass through walls, inside cupboards, behind wall tiles, even inside plugs and sockets.

Large infestations can go unnoticed due to harbourages being completely hidden during the day. Identifying them can be done by looking out for brown irregular streaks of liquid excreta on surfaces, shining a light or squirting an aerosol into potential harbourages, or a night inspection which may catch them foraging. For the pest controller the accurate identification of pest species and a practical knowledge of pest behaviour will determine the next step.

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Once you have discovered a problem, the quicker you respond the more painless the solution. The more information available to the pest controller, the more effective the intervention, which is why reporting and record keeping are keys to integrated pest management. A log of sightings needs to be kept, documenting the name of person making the report, date, time, location and pest sighted. Any pest treatments must also be fully documented along with a site plan showing the position of baits or traps used.

Context is everything for the pest controller. Not only is the history of pest control important, but also where your business is situated. Do the premises layout and types of business around you attract pests? Is there a local water source, railway line or landfill site, or does the surrounding area provide good nesting for pests?

Of course, preventing pests getting into your premises in the first place is the most effective form of Integrated Pest Management. All pests have one thing in

common; they are looking for food, warmth and shelter. The problem for us is that it does not take much food (in the case of a mouse just a few grammes a day) to sustain an infestation.

Overnight exposed food, unwashed food containers, food debris and used packaging all attract pests. Integrated inspection and cleaning programmes are the answer. Storage areas must be kept clean using close-fitting containers that are regularly emptied. Access like gaps under doors or holes must be blocked.

Common ways for pests to find their way into food premises are in stock deliveries, on second hand machinery, or via wooden pallets. Pests arriving in raw materials from overseas can pose unique problems. 'You can get exotic species coming in, and if the conditions are right they will thrive' says Iain Whatley, Group Health and Safety Manager for Green Compliance. 'Creatures may have been previously subjected to an insecticide and the genetic resistance gets passed down the generations, so something that happened 30 or 40 years ago could mean a pest having an inbuilt resistance to the chemicals being used.' This presents a significant problem to the pest control industry, and means care must be taken to apply the correct amount of chemicals to control the pest problem. BPCA Technical Manager Richard Moseley explains "It's a delicate balance between applying the correct chemical in the right formulation to control the infestation and prevent resistance developing, while not putting too many harmful chemicals into the environment." This paradox hasn't escaped regulators in Brussels. Since the publication of the CIEH guidance the EU Biocidal Products Directive is set to once again change the pest control landscape.

Under the directive anticoagulant rodenticides will no longer be allowed in permanent outdoor baits known as perimeter baits. Again environmental concerns are the driver: toxic residues have been found in species further up the food chain such as red kites, buzzards and foxes.

Mr Charlton explains: "The current practice in the food industry, which has been in place for 45 years now, is to string baits around your perimeter which could be a few

hundred metres away from the building, which is where the field mice are. They eat the bait and are in turn preyed upon by predators and scavengers. The industry needs to stop the practice of having permanent toxic baits in these areas."

This will mean either using physical traps or monitoring blocks, with pest technicians having to make more frequent site visits, in turn having a significant cost implication for the food industry, warns Lee Brodie, director of Discreet Pest Control Ltd.

"Costs will go up because companies charge on time and preparation," says Mr Brodie. "This will require more labour and inventiveness throughout the industry to deal with rodents and insects. You only have a certain amount of ammunition, and if they take it away then you are firing blanks."

Richard Moseley, BPCA Technical Manager added "the use of toxic external monitoring points is subject to the risk assessment of a professionally trained pest controller – high risk sites and heavy migration may require the consideration of regular toxic monitoring."

Given the potential public health risks posed by pests, John Charlton believes one of the most important considerations for those working in the food industry is how they go about choosing a pest controller. A written specification is needed with an agreed frequency of visits, agreed key performance indicators and the pest control company should be a member of a recognised trade association (e.g. BPCA). Consultant John Forrest of Forrest Environmental Services agrees. "It's vital to have in place a proper programme of works and for both sides to know what is expected of them. In the event of a problem, recourse can be made to the service contract. The majority of pest problems I am asked to look into boil down to the contract and whether both parties are pulling their respective weights."

Ralph Izod, Managing Director of Dyno-Pest feels there is another major factor to consider – value for money. "In the current climate it's tempting to choose the lowest price provider for pest control. In the last 20 years we've been used as the fourth emergency service by some facilities

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managers when their 'cheap as chips' pest control provider has either failed to prevent a major outbreak or has demanded a small fortune to tackle an outbreak because "the existing contract does not cover this."

Izod feels it's all about value for money, not simply price. He continues "When appointing a pest control company, you must have faith in their ability to successfully eradicate any existing infestations and to manage your premises so that problems don't recur. Value doesn't mean being either the cheapest or most expensive provider. It means knowing exactly what is needed to effectively manage your premises so they are kept pest free today, tomorrow and in the future. Value means safeguarding your reputation: being accountable and available without delay should a problem manifest itself."

Charlton agrees "It is important not to go for the cheapest option. Select the contractor on his ability to carry out the work on your site and to check the company has the right number of qualified staff to respond if need

be." Both the BPCA and CIEH provide guidance on selecting a pest controller to suit your specific needs via their websites (see also earlier issues of **alexo** magazine).

Similarly, it is vital to ensure your contractor is delivering the proper service as part of your due diligence. Martin Harvey from Harvey Environmental Services said "We approached a nationwide chain of fine dining restaurants offering our pest control services. The client informed us that the multinational company servicing their 30+ sites hadn't sent an account manager for ages, the technical staff seemed to spend just a few minutes on each site, and had given no further advice on proofing, housekeeping or management practices since the initial visit. All this resulted in a series of difficult to eradicate problems, which we quickly solved through teamwork between our staff and the restaurant's employees."

The message is clear: successful pest control can be achieved by following a few simple steps - and by keeping an eye on your contractor!

Issue four of **alexo** (Winter 2012) will follow up on this topic.

Pest control procedures in the food industry is available for free at www.cieh.org/policy/publications

www.dynopest.co.uk/
www.johncharltonassociates.com
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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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Trouble on two wings tackling flying insect problems

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

SMALL INSECTS – BIG PROBLEMS

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

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

1 Nuisance

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

2 Disease transmission

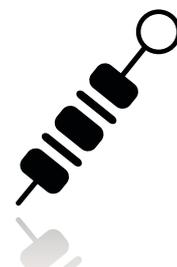
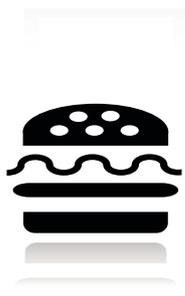
Flies are widely recognised as carriers of disease-causing organisms, and their high mobility makes them particularly effective vectors. They acquire these pathogens whilst crawling or feeding on infected materials such as putrid waste, and may then subsequently infect human food when they alight on it. This transfer may occur simply as the fly walks on the food, but will also take place as a result of the fly’s defaecation and regurgitation. A wide range of pathogens have been isolated from houseflies, and in a healthcare setting the presence on flies of the notorious MRSA and *C. difficile*, is of particular concern.

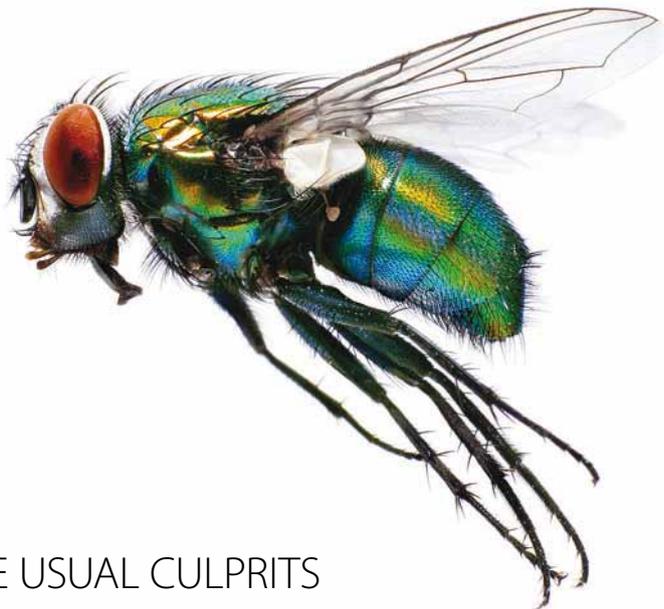
3 Prosecution

Environmental Health Departments have a responsibility to enforce food safety and environmental health legislation. Typically EHOs will work with and advise businesses where potential insect issues are present. However as a last resort, and where advice has not been heeded, then legal action may be taken against offending businesses. Prosecutions for fly problems are likely to lead to more negative exposure for the business.

4 Impact on brand

Negative publicity arising from a fly incident can have a significant impact on the public’s and customers’ perception of the brand. This in turn is likely to affect the business itself. Such impacts are difficult to quantify, but brand-aware organisations are very conscious of the risks, and will take great care to avoid such negative exposure.





THE USUAL CULPRITS

In tackling fly problems, the first step is to work out what types of flies are present, or could be in the future. As Akeel Jaffar of London-based HLA Pest Control Services points out, “Identification is essential if the source of the flies is to be located, and appropriate management measures then put in place.”

Remember also that the fly’s life cycle comprises not just the adult winged stage, but also the egg, larva (maggot) and pupal stages. Although it is the mobile adult stages that are normally of most concern, finding and removing the habitat of the preceding young stages is often key to solving the problem.

Four steps toward effective fly management

Once our pests have been identified, we can start making progress towards their prevention and elimination. Again we are going to need to work closely with our pest control contractor on this, although it is likely that much of the work will eventually have to be done by ourselves. As Moray says; “There are some companies that still believe that their pest control contractor should be able to resolve their pest problems unaided. In reality, the best pest control is always a partnership, and when dealing with flying insects, there is probably around a 70/30 split between customer and contractor inputs.”

1 Find the source of the flies, and remove it

Many fly problems arise within the site itself, so work with your pest control contractor to find out where the flies are coming from. They should be able to identify specific fly breeding sites, and provide you with constructive advice on how to reduce or eliminate them. For example, regularly cleaning

“There are many... cases that demonstrate not only a threat to the wellbeing of the customer, but which also have had a serious impact on the business itself.”

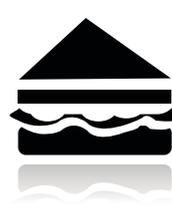
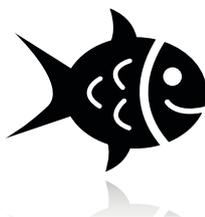
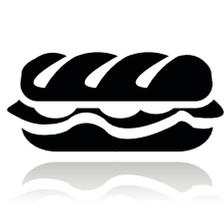
the inside of waste bins will help reduce housefly numbers, drying out areas of wet flooring may reduce drain fly breeding, while removing sugary deposits from under bars and serveries may reduce fruit fly breeding. “One bakery we were involved with” says Brian Duffin of Rokill “had persistent housefly problems. Our investigation found that the flies were breeding within wet flour trapped under equipment. Once the client put procedures in place to prevent this happening in the future, fly problems decreased markedly.”

2 Prevent more insects entering

However no matter how clean you keep your own site, there is little you can do about the surrounding area. There is the likelihood therefore that there will be a steady flow of flying insects attempting to access your premises, throughout the warmer months and into the autumn. Window and door screens are very effective providing they are fitted and maintained well, and are essential in food preparation areas. However other kinds of premises may also require proofing measures. A new hi-tech pharmaceutical manufacturing site in the UK ran into problems with cluster flies in production areas, that contaminated the end product. Preventing contamination required proofing work to the cladding on plant towers.

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

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KNOW YOUR ENEMY

Most flying insect problems are caused by a relatively small range of culprits.

Over time, the importance of the different fly groups may change, as Professor Moray Anderson of Killgerm Chemicals points out. “In recent years, we have seen increased numbers of problems in buildings with the smaller flies such as drain and fruit flies, and this appears to be linked to a reduction in the routine use of residual sprays.”



HOUSE FLIES

BLOW FLIES 'BLUEBOTTLES'

CLUSTER FLIES

FRUIT FLIES

DRAIN FLIES

WASPS

APPEARANCE

Medium-sized, dark coloured fly.

Large metallic blue or green flies.

Similar to house flies, but very different behaviour.

Small (<3mm), dark, with red eyes.

Several different types. All are small (<3mm), and most are dark coloured.

Unmistakable, large, with black and yellow bands.

TYPICAL SOURCES

The larvae live in a wide range of decaying organic waste. Food waste bins, landfill sites, and animal farms.

The larvae prefer dead or rotten meat.

The adults and young stages live outdoors in green areas for most of the warmer months.

The larvae live in decaying fruit and vegetable waste. Also in drink spillage in bars.

The larvae typically live in wet, dirty areas, such as drains, areas where waste water accumulates, wet waste bins, and sewage works.

Wasps build and live in a nest, containing up to several thousand wasps. The nest is often in roof voids, cavity walls, or other similar places.

LIKELY PROBLEMS

The adult flies come indoors, and settle on food and surfaces, creating a nuisance and the risk of contamination.

The adults will lay their eggs on raw or cooked meat and fish. Also, a dead bird or rodent in the roof or chimney may become infested and produce hundreds of flies.

In the autumn, the adult flies will come indoors to hibernate, often in roof voids, sometimes in their thousands.

Large numbers of small flies indoors creates a nuisance, and the risk of contamination.

Large numbers of small flies indoors creates a nuisance, and the risk of contamination.

Wasp stings, nuisance to staff and customers, and the risk of contamination of food products.

3 Eliminate any remaining insects

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

In roof voids control of cluster fly relies heavily on the careful use of insecticides during the autumn. Similarly, at locations such as waste composting facilities, regular use of insecticides for housefly control may be essential. Nigel Binns of Pestex Services in Staffordshire agrees. “A good analogy is painting the Forth Bridge - it’s a continual process. In waste facilities, the fly population can rise rapidly. If you allow numbers to grow by cutting back on applications, it becomes difficult to re-take control. That’s why an on-going programme of treatments is essential.”

At food handling sites however, insecticides are less likely

to be used routinely, and alternative products such as electric fly killer units are more commonly used instead. Roger Featherstone of Cambridge-based Five Star Pest Control points out that “Although some units still use a high-voltage grid to kill the flies, units fitted instead with a sticky board are much more commonly fitted now, as these reduce the risk of insect fragments contaminating the premises.” Recent guidance from the British Retail Consortium also steers food companies in the direction of sticky board units. In-depth knowledge of these units is vital. Daniela Edward, European Business Manager at PestWest said “we believe good fly control is more than just hanging a unit where it can be seen to emit light. For a fly control unit to be effective, it is absolutely imperative that the right unit is chosen, positioned and maintained correctly. The choice of UV-tubes is another crucial aspect.”

As well as simply killing flying insects, the types and numbers

of insects caught by the EFK can provide useful insight into the status of pest control on your site. Your pest control contractor may be able to provide a catch analysis service, which involves identifying the insects caught, establishing trends, and providing guidance on an appropriate response. For example, a sudden spike in the numbers of fruit flies may indicate a hidden build up of organic waste, that needs finding and removing. Alternatively, the presence of numbers of large night-flying moths, may indicate that proofing measures need checking, such as a kitchen door being left open on warm summer evenings. A good pest control contractor should be able to read the catch like a book, and provide you with constructive advice.

Besides due diligence, good pest control companies should also highlight the areas which are of greatest importance to your business. Steve Jackson of P+L Systems says "Contemporary decorative units are becoming increasingly popular as businesses aim to protect their brands and ensure that customers have a great experience. These discreet units are ideal for front-of-house areas, including receptions, lobbies and restaurants."

4 Keep records

Finally, pest control work on your site should always be documented. Good records are not only a legal requirement, but they will also be useful to auditors, to the Environmental Health department should they visit, and they will be useful to you as you monitor progress and plan future fly control work. Your pest contractor should maintain a folder at your site, containing records of all findings and work done. Do check the folder at intervals to make sure it meets your requirements, and if not, discuss this with your contractor.

OUT-THINKING THE FLIES

Flying insect pests will never be completely eradicated. Every summer brings a new crop of flies, wasps and other seasonal pests, that will yet again threaten our premises and businesses. That threat is increasingly being taken seriously. As Brian Duffin says "we are seeing a growing intolerance of flies, especially in the food

"If you allow numbers to grow by cutting back on applications, it becomes difficult to re-take control. That's why an on-going programme of treatments is essential."



industry. Clients now want to know where each fly is from, and how to prevent it."

Effective prevention and control of flying insects requires a close partnership between yourself and your pest control contractor. Together you need to look back at last year, see what worked and what didn't, and learn from it. You need your contractor to assess the risks of infestation, identify any current pests, and recommend appropriate measures. They need you to ensure that proofing is maintained, waste is handled properly, and cleaning schedules followed. So, if you haven't done so already, call your pest contractor, arrange a meeting, and draw up a pro-active plan for 2012. Careful planning now will reduce the need for fire-fighting in mid-summer, and we all know what is happening in mid-summer this year. We can't afford to be closed for a week...

www.pest-management.com



Clive Boase has a background in the development and evaluation of novel products for public health pest control. However for 20 years he has run the Pest Management Consultancy, which provides independent support internationally on urban pest issues to a broad range of clients. He is involved on various levels including training and development, running international conferences, novel product development and evaluation, litigation, and technical writing. He is particularly interested in the management of flying insects, and has recently co-authored a major new book on mosquitoes and their control.

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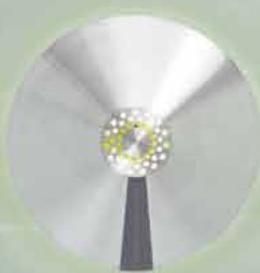
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FIVE STAR PROBLEM: are restaurant hygiene ratings letting diners down?

As of 1 April this year, the old Scores On The Doors programme (which enables diners to check on the outlet's hygiene rating) will be

replaced with a new Food Hygiene Rating Scheme (FHRS). The aim is to have a single national scheme so that people in any area can recognise the ratings. The new scheme operates in much the same way as Scores On The Doors but with a more national focus and consumers will be able to check an establishment's rating on the Food Standards Agency (FSA) website.



Says Catriona Stewart, head of the FSA's Food Hygiene Ratings Team, "The food hygiene rating given to a business reflects the level of compliance with the requirements of food hygiene law at the time of inspection by a local authority food safety officer. The officer assesses how hygienically the food is handled – how it is prepared, cooked, re-heated, cooled and stored; the condition of the structure of the buildings – the cleanliness, layout, lighting, ventilation and other facilities, and how the business manages and records what it does to make sure food is safe." According to

With no national scheme for restaurants to display their pest control credentials, is it time the Food Standards Agency and other awarding bodies stepped up and included preventative pest control in their list of criteria? Hazel Davis reports.

Stewart, "As part of the assessment of the condition of the structure of the buildings, the officer will take account of the pest control provisions

in place and of any evidence of pest infestation/activity."

It's worth noting that food businesses that supply only other businesses – and not consumers – are not, at this stage, part of the FHRS, though they are, however, still subject to the requirements of food hygiene law and will be inspected by local authority food safety officers in the same way as those that supply consumers. But is this really good enough from a preventative pest control perspective?

Recent research from Rentokil found that 19% of businesses in the hotel, catering and hospitality sectors had encountered a pest problem in the last year (see news item, page 5). As much as 86% of those businesses surveyed said they were worried about the damage to their reputation a pest infestation could cause.

Does it make any sense, then, that a restaurant can get a five-star rating (the highest available in the new FHRS scheme) and not have a pest control contract in place?

/continued over...

Savvas Othon, Rentokil's technical director says, "The most valuable asset of a restaurant is its reputation and a customer's take on this doesn't just come from food and service – hygiene levels are seen as just as important. Mice, rats, flies and cockroaches can pose a particular threat to food preparation and storage areas, because of the diseases they carry and can also be a huge nuisance to customers, scarring a business's reputation forever."

Richard Moseley is technical manager at BPCA. He says, "If a member of the public goes to a restaurant or café and they see a sign saying five stars, they would be surprised to realise that the premises doesn't have to have preventative pest control in place to achieve that rating." It makes no sense, says Moseley, "because pests are life's great survivors. Just because there is nothing there today, it doesn't mean that it won't be different tomorrow. A delivery can bring pest activity, an open door can let a cat, mouse or a fox in – even the customers can unwittingly bring in pests on their clothing. Pest control is about prevention as well as cure."

Moseley adds, "The Food Standards Agency needs to understand that pests are a major issue and do cause illness and death. The consumer should be able to have confidence."

At the moment BPCA is in talks with the Chartered Institute of Environmental Health on the ratings issue, says Moseley, and has had a series of regional meetings together to get the message across to EHOs. "But at the moment," he says, "When inspectors are giving out the scores, all they can do is base them on the list they are given."

David Hine is an environmental health officer (food safety) at Westminster Council. He says, "Currently food businesses are given a certificate and a window sticker to display their food hygiene rating as stars. The star ratings are being made public to keep customers informed about the food safety standards within the business. This means that high-achieving businesses receive the recognition that they deserve, and underachieving premises have an incentive to raise their game and improve safety. The rating is calculated through an assessment of hygiene, structure and hygiene management following a routine inspection by an EHO. Pest control management, evidence of infestation and proofing to prevent pest access, do account for part of this assessment and therefore their star rating."

Under food safety law, the responsibility for ensuring that pests are controlled within their premises lies with the operator of the food business. In theory, says Hine, "if the food business



operator could demonstrate that pest control was managed adequately without the need for a contractor, then potentially the business could achieve a good score. However, in a busy city such as London, it is more likely that good pest control within food businesses can only be achieved if the pest control company and the food business operator work in partnership. This would include the use of pest control reports."

As the responsibility rests with the food business operator, any enforcement taken under food safety law would be upon that operator.

There is no legal requirement to employ a pest control contractor, only a requirement for the food business operator to have adequate procedures in place to control pests within their premises.

But many pest control industry leaders think this isn't good enough. Says Othon, "Restaurants can't afford to let pest issues harm their reputation. Normal preventative measures, like keeping food covered and crumbs off floors, are always good ideas but having the right technology in place to monitor rodent activity or a fly infestation is vital before an outbreak."

Clare Riley, editor of Eat Out magazine, suggests the creation of "a register of restaurants that have achieved the highest standards. This may be a better method that could be promoted generally to consumers so that those who are interested have a method of discovery. However, in reality the consumer has a basic expectation that these standards are

maintained, so a name and shame approach is possibly a more useful method."

There are other schemes which could provide a model for a pest control ratings system. The Sustainable Restaurant Association, for example, offers its restaurants 'Sustainability Champion' badges for undertaking its

Sustainability Rating process and excelling across 14 key areas of

sustainability. The Vegetarian Society offers membership to restaurants who demonstrate a 'clear understanding of the vegetarian lifestyle' so a similar scheme for championing pest control could work.

One of the major problems with this idea is that restaurants and hospitality outlets just don't want to talk about pest control. Says Riley, "Whilst it is vital that customers are confident that a restaurant, or any eating establishment for that matter, has an exceptionally high level of cleanliness and environmental health (which would include appropriate pest control), it is unlikely that they would use this as a way of promoting their business as the mention of the subject may

"We are still very reticent to talk about pests in the UK. When I worked in Canada they used to advertise their good pest control something rotten. But we don't. It's just not very 'British'"

have the opposite effect to the desired one."

Food critic Giles Coren agrees. "I think probably that even mentioning the word 'rat' or 'cockroach' even in a 'we haven't got any' context, would probably put most diners off," he says.

Says David Oldbury, chartered environmental health practitioner and member of NPAP, the National Pest Advisory Panel, "We are still very reticent to talk about pests in the UK. When I worked in Canada they used to advertise their good pest control something rotten. But we don't. It's just not very 'British'."

So why is there such hostility to the idea of adding pest prevention to the list of enforced criteria for a hygiene rating? Moseley says he thinks there is concern that there will be an extra cost to the retailer. But, he says, "If you were to be shut down because of a pest problem your business might never recover. For a couple of pounds a day you could be protected."

No other ratings schemes currently take pest control into account, though they do assess on hygiene. AA Hotel Services' quality standards are agreed with various tourist boards and leave the pest control practise up to the individual. Its highest award to a restaurant is five rosettes, which demonstrates, "where cooking compares with the best in the world." The guidelines state that recipients of five rosettes have "highly individual voices, exhibit breathtaking culinary skills, and set standards to which others aspire to, yet few achieve." But no mention is made of external factors such as pest control or hygiene.

Michelin stars are awarded for culinary excellence. Rebecca Burr, editor of the Michelin Guide GB & Ireland, simply says, "While this area is too specialised for us to really comment on, we would expect the highest levels of hygiene and cleanliness in any restaurant listed in the Guide, not just those with stars."

So the current feeling within the food industry is that as long as premises are currently hygienic then there is no problem. But is that enough?

"I can only second-guess but I imagine the FSA believes it has covered potential pest problems within the structure of the inspection," says Oldbury. However, he agrees, "Pests can surface in a variety of ways. You can get contaminated products that come in and I am a strong advocate that pest control measures should be a consideration."

One of the problems Oldbury found when he was working as an environmental health officer in the UK was that the pest control contractors were never allowed to do the job properly. He says, "You do have to give the contractors a reasonable chance of eradicating the pests and proprietors often don't allow this because of the cost. This should probably be reflected in the ratings system." Another thing he believes should be acknowledged is outside space. "Adequate storage and disposal is as important as the food preparation area," he says, "and not just disposal area but frequency of disposal, which can make a big difference and should be encouraged or acknowledged."

But to encourage restaurateurs to audit their supply chain

would be to open up a whole, potentially costly can of worms, say some critics. Oldbury agrees this could be difficult. "Many Asian and Indian restaurants import directly from suppliers overseas" he adds, "of course it would be nice if restaurants did audit, but it's impractical to enforce and it might be a call too far. We don't want to put too many burdens on them so they do nothing."

It's clear that recognition of preventative pest control needs further consideration. BPCA will be continuing the debate with suppliers, regulators and ratings scheme operators. If you'd like to join the debate, please get in touch.

editor@alexo.org.uk



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

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the
industry
that
dare not
speak
its name



David Lodge of Beaver Pest Control discusses why clients shouldn't be ashamed of pest control – they should shout it from the rooftops.



Oscar Wilde was not a pest controller, but had he been he might well have penned this quote as opposed to that immortal one relating to love. As an industry, pest control is kept hidden by clients, like an illicit love affair. But why aren't we openly loved by you?

I guess that you are just happy to maintain a covert relationship with a pest controller. After all, we know how to keep a secret, we operate with both the stealth of the SAS and the speed of a ninja, and we appreciate that discretion is key. Of course, if the worst ever did happen and we were to be discovered in your metaphorical wardrobe without our clothes on, we could always blame it upon that infestation of hungry clothes moth.

But why are the benefits of pest control not shouted about from the houses, hotels and restaurants? When I planned this article I thought 'great, we've carried out some fantastic work throughout London hotels and restaurants, this is a real chance to present some case studies on working together to achieve zero tolerance'. Suffice to say our clientele were not falling over themselves to be referenced, and consequently the interviews and quotes have not been forthcoming.

Of course, had Mr Wilde been a pest controller in America today he would not have written these words (yes I know that he didn't) because over the pond they are proud to advertise the fact that they employ companies to keep their premises pest-free. Should this not be the attitude of the UK hospitality industry too?

The cultural shift over there is that restaurant patrons and hotel guests look for proof of pest control contracts before spending their money in premises; this culture stemming from the home, where contracts are more common.

So should your property proudly declare its love? Would you benefit from a 'protected by...' plaque for pest control, just like you do with your security or fire protection? Many clients have considered this proposal, but demurred at the last minute. Nobody wants to admit that pests exist, or might be a problem.

We recently picked up a contract with a five star hotel somewhere in London that had a significant problem with mice. The hotel was terrified of the adverse publicity, even though most other buildings around it suffered the same fate. The hotel has an external skin with multiple entry points via an insulated void – ideal mouse territory. Just to make this slightly more interesting the mice were exhibiting behavioural resistance, i.e. they had learned to avoid bait boxes, cereal-based poisons, and even the infamous sticky board. With a limited range of treatment options, harnessing the assistance and trust of the building owners and staff was vital.

Beaver Pest Control ultimately succeeded in ridding this hotel, and many other hostleries throughout London, of pests by going back to basics. We found out what is going on in the

ceiling and wall voids, the areas where the mice breed and hide. A good survey uncovers signs of activity, and the experienced pest controller will safely locate tracking powders, palatable baits (possibly using local food sources), and even modern day snap traps to achieve control.

Our hotel general manager has an excellent working relationship with her technician, resulting in blocking holes correctly, making a competent handyman available, improved stacking, rotation and cleaning, carrying out all of our recommendations and paying extra to professionally proof doors and external apertures like vents and windows.

Time, ingenuity, teamwork and effort solved this problem, as it shall yours. Yes, this comes at a cost, both financially and in terms of commitment. However, the burning question always remains, how much is the real cost to you in terms of contamination and reputation should the work not be carried out properly?

And remember, you cannot keep an affair a secret forever, so you might as well come clean now. Let's get married!

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Better, together

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One such company is Alphakill, whose MD Tony Baker commented "Food service clients are demanding more and more from their suppliers, and as specifications like BRC and AIB become tighter, they need improved support from their pest controller."

Tony provides his client base with add-ons such as pest awareness and hygiene training. He said "By ensuring frontline staff are aware of the pest species prevalent in their type of work, clients can minimise their risk. The easiest way to prevent pest problems is to remove ready sources of food, water and shelter for the pests. It seems simple, but often staff aren't aware their actions have a direct effect on the likelihood of infestations. By offering this training before the site opens or at shift changes I add value for clients with minimum loss of



productivity – it means I get fewer call outs, so everyone is happy."

Professor Mike Whieldon is Food Safety Consultant with Penta Foods Ltd. "The beauty of working with an independent pest

controller like Alphakill is that they are always ready to go the extra mile, and very keen to work with us to address any

"Everyone in your company should be pest aware."

issues. Tony's advice on how to reduce infestation risk has proved invaluable. We will be using Alphakill to provide food hygiene training for our staff, as Tony is one of the few pest controllers we've found with qualifications to provide Levels 1 and 2 Food Hygiene training, along with refresher courses."

Sonia Mace, Quality Manager for Classic Fine Foods said "Warehouse staff may not be as aware of the signs of potential infestation as, say, those in food manufacturing, so by spending just an hour or two on where to look and what to watch for, Alphakill have helped us decrease compliance issues. They offered an extension to the standard pest control service by creating a pest section for our staff induction programme. This has meant we can stay on top of any potential problems. Everyone in your company should be pest aware - we would certainly recommend working with your pest control company to develop training for the staff team."

Tony Baker echoed this point "The pest controller can't be on site 24/7, and by using the staff team as their eyes and ears, they can resolve infestation or proofing issues much more quickly and efficiently. Simple things like training on prompt removal of waste products, basic signs of infestation, and spotting gaps where pests can find entry to premises are all worth their weight in gold." The message is clear – the next time you speak to your pest controller, ask how you can work together to the benefit of all.

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Pest management with care

Dealing with pests in hospitality

The pest contractor must have a clear understanding of the client's requirements, and the client needs to know what is technically possible and economically viable. The hospitality industry has common concerns regarding pest control. Therefore the British Pest Control Association (BPCA) has formed an alliance with the British Hospitality Association (BHA) to produce a series of fact sheets to alert BHA members and the wider hospitality sector to

the key issues that affect them.



Simon Forrester, BPCA Chief Executive said "Pest controllers see the same issues arising time after time, and in the fact sheets we share their tips on how to maintain a pest-free environment. Case studies will be used where appropriate to put the guidance in perspective, and show what a difference the advice has made in real-life situations."



Ufi Ibrahim, chief executive, BHA welcomed the alliance. "Pests are unwelcome in any hospitality

premises and these fact sheets show operators how best they can be avoided – and eliminated. We are delighted to join with BPCA in producing this material so that the critical importance of good pest control can be highlighted."

The fact sheets will be released over the next few months, and will be placed on the BHA and BPCA websites. If you would like to receive copies by email, simply take out a free subscription to receive **alexo** magazine via www.alexo.org.uk/subscribe, and we will email the factsheets as they are launched. If there are other topics you would like to see added to the suite of fact sheets, please get in touch via editor@alexo.org.uk

The first fact sheet, on 'Seven steps to prevent pests' is shown here.

www.bpca.org.uk
www.bha.org.uk

The fact sheets

Seven steps to prevent pests

Help! I have an infestation – is it my fault? What should I do?

How to select a pest controller

How to work with your pest controller: reaching understanding through a contract specification

"Waiter, there's a fly in my soup!": how to deal with pest-related complaints

A code of practice for pest control

Bed bugs: public health enemy number one

Flying insect control: A practical guide

Rodent Infestations: simple steps to getting control

Dealing with cockroaches



Pest fact sheet

1

Seven steps to prevent pests

Richard Moseley, Technical Manager from the British Pest Control Association takes you through his top tips to keep out pests.

1 Don't attract pests to your premises

If you want to maintain a pest free environment there are a number of steps you can take. Without a doubt, the first and most important is to try to maintain a clean environment around your property to stop the attraction of pests.

Pests such as rodents and cockroaches are great opportunists, and will take advantage of the smallest food spillages. Consider your external bin and waste areas – if your bins are overflowing or encrusted food spillages are building up around waste stores, act now before it is too late. Ensure bins are emptied on a regular basis and implement a regular cleaning programme for susceptible areas. Always ensure that plants and foliage are cut back and are kept in good order, as overgrowth will encourage pests to come close to your premises, meaning infestation is just inches away.

2 Make your premises pest proof

Pests such as house mice can enter a property through the smallest of gaps (if you can place the end of a pen in a gap, then it is large enough for a mouse to gain access). It can be difficult to completely prevent pest entry, but by maintaining a good standard of repair to any property, it will automatically make it less favourable to pests.

Where gaps and opportunities do exist, there are some reasonably cost effective measures that can be considered (such as bristle strips and fly screens) to help control the intrusion of pests.

3 Time is essential

When dealing with pests such as bed bugs, early detection is essential if you want to control and eradicate an infestation. Make sure you have a way of staff reporting and recording any activity such as a log book or a diary. Many

infestations get out of control because of poor communication regarding the location and type of infestation. The more information you have for the pest controller, the better his chances of success.

4 Training

If you want staff to help with the control of pests by reporting any suspicious signs of activity, they may need some basic pest awareness training, especially when identifying and controlling pests such as the bed bug. Give your staff the knowledge to spot issues - early eradication could save you £1,000s in lost revenues.

5 Know your limitations

It is easy to find information on most topics via the internet, and there are a number of pest control products that can be bought across the counter for the non-professional user. However, if you do encounter pest activity that you feel you can tackle yourself, know your limitations. Professional pest controllers have access to specialist products and have undertaken vast amounts of training. If you attempt to treat a pest infestation internally, you may find you are using the wrong product and may leave yourself open to prosecution. Even if you are treating the right pest, poor technique can cause resistance and bait avoidance, ultimately lengthening treatment times and raising costs.

6 Make the best use of your pest controller

Pest controllers are not just employed to kill pests if they happen to crop up on your property. They should be visiting you on a regular basis to inspect your properties and alert you to early signs of pest infestation. Your pest control operator should also be drawing your attention to any deficiencies on your site

that may attract pests (see above). Pest control professionals are a much under-used resource that should be ignored at your peril. If you are given recommendations by your contractor, try to act upon them. If you don't, legal representatives such as environmental health officers may take a hard line if they find a pest infestation that might have been prevented, had some simple recommendations from your contractor been followed.

7 Always use a professional!

How do you know which pest control company to use? A quick internet search will give you access to hundreds, if not thousands of pest controllers. But how do you know that they have the required level of knowledge and training – vital to ensuring control of potentially damaging pests with potentially dangerous products.

We would always advise that you use a company that is registered with an internationally recognised trade body such as the British Pest Control Association. If you use one of our 400+ servicing members you can be assured that your contractor is suitably trained, qualified and insured, and that they have been inspected on a regular basis by a trained representative of BPCA.

When the pest technician arrives on site, ask to see their PROMPT card, which shows they have the right training and are keeping up to date on developments in pest control. Always remember that there is a cost involved with maintaining membership of an organisation such as BPCA. A cheap pest control quote may be attractive, but it may not necessarily be the safest and most cost effective way of protecting your reputation, your customers and your livelihood.

Pest control as a topic is becoming ever more popular with the media. Laurence Barnard investigates where the smell of greasepaint masks the whiff of pest activity.

lights camera action!

The public has always had a fascination with the work of our sector, meaning some pest controllers have had to learn new skills, including giving snappy interview sound bites and looking good on camera.

One pest controller who's had his fair share of the media spotlight recently is Jim England from Protex, who said "One minute I'm up to my elbows in bird guano, and the next I'm having my makeup applied. I've recently featured on the BBC Breakfast sofa talking about a case of animal cruelty where a member of the public had caught a squirrel in a live catch trap, and subsequently drowned it. Quite rightly the guy was prosecuted and fined by the RSPCA. The BBC researcher asked if I would be available for interview the following morning to give expert opinion on the prosecution, and what he ought to have done."

What Jim didn't know is that there's no list of questions in advance, or the fact they had a fellow interviewee who was very 'pro-squirrel' – which made the interview start to look like 'good cop, bad cop'. Jim coped admirably, and said of his experience "The main thing was that we got the message out there about the importance of using professional companies that are members of the BPCA, such as Protex."

Other recent stories where Jim and fellow BPCA members have featured include:

- 'Ratzilla' (the giant rats of Bradford)
- Lola – the bed bug sniffer dog
- Rats at Downing Street (the four legged variety!)
- Urban fox attacks in Fulham
- Boom time for rats.

It's not just pest controllers who are asked to speak: BPCA Technical Manager, Richard Moseley said "the Association is often contacted by the media looking for a juicy soundbite or contentious opinion on a pest-related subject. We get asked all sorts of questions; some of them quite difficult to answer, some bizarre, and others sensationalised to get the answers that fit the angle they want to run with."

David Johnson of BPCA's PR agency Shepherd PR said "In some

ways it's a good thing as it raises awareness of the pest control market as a whole and, if the BPCA is asked to contribute to articles, it boosts the profile of the organisation and the credibility of its members."

It's not just the news crews and journalists that have taken an interest in the industry; top network executives and television producers have also delved into the world of pest control. Protex haven't just limited themselves to the BBC sofa, having recently taken part in Sarah Beeny's C4 series 'Help! My House is Infested' which focused on the technology available to the pest control industry to remove rats from a suburban home in North West London.

Their most recent foray into the world of media came about again as a result of their BPCA membership. ITV1 has commissioned 'Dirty Britain', a programme that looks at a gentleman living in East London whose home had literally been taken over by pigeons. The programme goes out in May and is spread over two episodes.

Jim commented "It's very nice to contribute, as it endorses Protex as a professional organisation, but more importantly it's about educating the public and promoting the trade and the importance of using BPCA members."

Watch Jim's interviews at www.youtube.com/user/protexpestcontrol

www.protexpest.co.uk

www.shepherd-pr.com



Laurence Barnard joined the BPCA in April this year as Marketing and Communications Officer. He has over five years of marketing experience in the higher education sector, and was previously the Editor in Chief of Derby's award winning student magazine 'Dusted'. Laurence also has experience of working with the media, specifically The Times, The Guardian, The Observer and BBC Radio 4.



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Pestered by pests?

Cartoon cat Tom infamously used a lump of cheddar to ensnare his teeny rival, mouse Jerry. But, in fact, rodents have a sweet tooth, preferring foods high in sugar and fat such as honey, cake and even fried foods.

The world of pest control is full of similar misconceptions. It's simply not true that once a building becomes infected with cockroaches it will always be infected. In fact they can be successfully eradicated with a detailed pest management programme. Nor do bedbugs locate their hosts by smelling their blood. Actually they detect the carbon dioxide exhaled by humans and mammals as well as body heat. Let's hope the prediction that visitors to the 2012 Olympics in London are to ferry in millions of bedbugs is more fiction than fact, although based on the Vancouver and Sydney outbreaks the UK is preparing for an epidemic.

The legal minefields around pest control that companies and individuals can fall into are also very real. In 2012 two pest controllers employed by one London council were jailed for four months and each fined £7,000 for poisoning wildlife at a park after using a

pesticide without approval, contrary to the Control of Pesticides Regulations 1986. A highly-trained pest controller, on the other hand, would have used the correct dose of the right pesticide to minimise impact to the environment, as well as humans and animals. By law, certain pesticides can only be used by qualified technicians, and pest controllers should hold accreditations from a recognised scheme or trade body such as the British Pest Control Association. Otherwise the potential for wrongful damage is great.

Neglecting to document pest control work done is another danger. Last year a director of housing, regeneration and environment at another London council, was threatened with jail for contempt of court for allegedly failing to have the council deal with a pharaoh ant infestation in a tenant's home. In this instance the council had not carried out work as the pest control team had difficulty accessing

neighbouring properties. But even if measures had been taken, without an audit trail the council would have had a considerably weakened defence.

It's always best and cheaper in the long run to call in experienced pest control technicians. With SitexOrbis' known and trusted pest control service, work carried out can be viewed online, ensuring a complete audit trail with photographic evidence (this fulfills COSHH, FEPA and Control of Pesticides Regulations, legally entitling customers to access relevant pest control services documentation). SitexOrbis also offers an integrated service. Exterminating pests may lead to a requirement for other property services such as waste management, mould eradication or infection control, potentially requiring multiple sub-contractors. SitexOrbis has the expertise to perform a range of property services from removing hazardous waste to eradicating pests, saving customers time and money.

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Rat-eating plant is new species

Photo credit: Cindy Chiang Lih P'ang



A rat-eating plant has been declared a species previously unknown to science, seven years after it was first exhibited at the Chelsea Flower Show.

The huge 'Queen of Hearts' pitcher, one of the biggest carnivorous plants ever seen – with flowers stretching 2.5 metres across – took pride of place for five years, won gold medals for its growers, and was seen by hundreds of thousands of visitors.

Nepenthes robcantleyi was identified as new to science when, after being exhibited at Chelsea, samples were shown to Dr Martin

Cheek, an expert from the Royal Botanic Gardens in Kew. "It is not normally how new species are discovered," said Dr Cheek. "It is very unconventional and a great surprise.

But when I was presented with this material after the Chelsea Flower Show it didn't take me long to work out this is new to science. The plants are big and dramatic and are quite spectacular."

The pitcher plant also drew the attention of Sir David Attenborough, who

filmed it for his forthcoming Sky TV series about Kew's plants, to be aired in 3D later this year.

The plant has a gaping opening through which insects, small mammals and reptiles plunge into a cauldron of hydrochloric acid and enzymes which break down their bodies for the nutrients. The contents are similar to that of the human stomach.

The plant was discovered by Rob Cantley, a former Hong Kong police officer who switched career to follow his passion for growing pitcher plants. He found two tattered flower heads in 1997 when he explored a remote forest which had just been felled in Mindanao, in the Philippines. He managed to collect some seeds and successfully propagated nine. Three plants flowered and, from the seeds they produced, he and his staff at Borneo Exotics in Sri Lanka were able to grow 3,000 seedlings, some of which are now at Kew. Despite follow-up visits to the Philippines, the pitcher plant has never been seen in its natural setting again and, with its host forest destroyed, is believed to be extinct in the wild.

Cantley said: "We have rats in the nursery and they are quite regularly caught by these plants. We have to fish them out. The plant can cope with them but we can't – the smell is disgusting. In the wild the plant would usually cling to trees and, as well as insects, it would probably normally catch tree shrews and small lizards."

No word on whether pest controllers will start turning up with armfuls of plants, but if so, you heard it here first...

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