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PPC123

BPCA British Pest Control Association

PROFESSIONAL PEST CONTROLLER JULY 2026
THE JOURNAL OF THE UK PEST MANAGEMENT COMMUNITY

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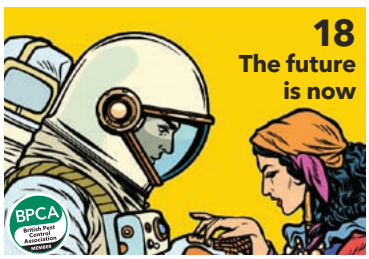

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PPC has been printed using carbon-balanced papers, showing our commitment to choosing a sustainable supply chain and reducing our carbon footprint with each edition.

BPCA Registered CPD points
Online CPD quiz = 1 point each

Remember to log anything else you've learned in your CPD diary for even more points. **bpca.org.uk/add**

Basis Prompt point allocation
Reading PPC mag = 2 points
Online CPD quiz = 1 point each
bpca.org.uk/find-cpd

The new old-fashioned way

We've recently been invited to lead a Trade Association Forum roundtable at its best practice exchange in London. The subject is membership magazines, and the invite comes off the back of PPC magazine winning Trade Association Magazine of the Year in 2025.

It's a lovely bit of recognition, but, more importantly, it has made us stop and think properly about why BPCA still produces a 50-plus-page printed magazine for the pest management sector.

Each issue of PPC is a big undertaking. It takes time, planning, late-night proofreading, good humour, a healthy respect for deadlines and the support of a huge number of staff, volunteers, writers, advertisers and contributors. It doesn't just appear by magic (despite what the production schedule sometimes seems to suggest).

When I [Scott] started at BPCA nearly ten years ago, PPC 85 copy was late going to the designer, and I was still very new to pest management. Finding features, writers and interviewees felt daunting.

But PPC turned out to be one of the best ways to learn the sector.

It helped me meet members. It helped me understand the people, the businesses, the technical debates and the practical realities behind professional pest management. It introduced me to the thought leaders, the quiet grafters, the specialists, the volunteers and the people with stories you couldn't make up if you tried.

More than 35 issues later, the magazine has changed a lot.

We've set targets for member voices, features, online readers and new writers. The page count has grown. The frequency has moved from four issues a year to three, giving us more time to make each edition count. The design has moved fully in-house. We use responsibly sourced paper and production methods. Our Outreach and Communications Committee has also taken on more responsibility for the magazine's direction.

At its best, PPC is the sector talking to itself.

We're very proud of the little community PPC magazine has cultivated over the years. We're not afraid to ask big questions. We're willing to take a risk on a controversial opinion piece (I once wrote to Chris Packham asking if he fancied a page - he declined - but at least saved us all from a comments section that would still be burning now).

PPC is still regularly cited by members as one of the most useful CPD resources BPCA produces. We also make PPC freely available to the whole sector. It's not locked away, because we want it to be a window into BPCA, our members' work and the professional standards this industry should be proud of.

But we're not stuck in print. Now 123 issues in, PPC is probably BPCA's longest-running communications channel. But around it we've built email bulletins, including PPC Now and CPD inspiration, social media, BPCA Digital and in-person Training Forums, and a WhatsApp community. We're also working on BPCA Connect, our new online community exclusively for members.

We're moving with the times, but there is still something special about producing something physical. Something that lands on your desk. Something that asks you to slow down for a moment. Something that doesn't ping, flash, refresh or demand that you accept cookies before reading page two.

We might be a small sector, but we deserve something that takes time and effort to produce.

So please, take a moment with this issue. Pop the kettle on. Adjust the lighting. Break out the good biscuits.

And BPCA members, while you're reading, think about what your page in PPC magazine might look like.

Our ambition for the next 123 issues is simple: more member stories, more voices, more useful ideas and more opportunities to share best practice across the sector.

It is your magazine, after all.

Claim your page today.

Scott + Kat

PPC editors
hello@bpca.org.uk

BPCA LAUNCHES NEW MANIFESTOS FOR WALES AND SCOTLAND

The British Pest Control Association (BPCA) has published two new manifestos setting out how the next Welsh and Scottish Governments can better protect homes, businesses and public health from pests. We've written to both governments to ask for a meeting to discuss the manifesto.

The manifestos released ahead of the May elections in both nations, focus on strengthening housing standards, improving public health outcomes and recognising the role of professional pest management in preventing problems before they escalate.

In both Wales and Scotland, BPCA is clear that no one should have to live with pest infestations caused by poor housing conditions, delayed repairs or inadequate waste management.

Protecting homes from pests

At the heart of both manifestos is a call for stronger protections for people living in rented accommodation.

BPCA is urging policymakers to recognise pests as a public health issue and ensure that tenants are protected from infestations in the same way they are from other housing hazards.

In Scotland, the manifesto specifically calls for Awaab's Law-style protections to be extended to include pests, while in Wales, the focus is on ensuring consistent protections across social housing, private rented homes and temporary accommodation. Across both nations, the message is the same. Pest problems in homes are not just inconvenient. They can damage property, contaminate food and spread disease.

A clear ask for the next governments

BPCA is encouraging members to be aware of the manifestos and the direction of travel across both nations. The Association will be engaging with policymakers, officials and stakeholders to push for the recommendations to be adopted as part of future housing and public health reforms. Rosina Robson, BPCA Chief Executive, said:

"We want to see governments in Wales and Scotland recognise that pests are not just a nuisance. They're a public health issue, and they need to be treated as such."

What this means for members

For BPCA members, the manifestos reinforce the importance of:

- Giving clear, preventative advice to clients
- Documenting recommendations to landlords and property managers
- Highlighting the risks associated with inaction.

BPCA will continue to keep members updated as discussions progress and opportunities arise to influence policy in both Wales and Scotland.

To learn more about BPCA's policy work, you can visit **bpca.org.uk/policy**

HOMELESS FAMILIES FORCED INTO PEST-INFESTED TEMPORARY ACCOMMODATION

On 22 April 2026, the Housing, Communities and Local Government Committee published its report Housing Conditions in Temporary Accommodation, revealing that homeless families in England are frequently placed in unsafe, pest-infested properties.

The report, part of the Committee's wider inquiry into housing conditions, found that infestations of rats, mice, cockroaches and other pests are common in temporary accommodation.

Evidence included accounts of children being bitten by rats or ants, causing injury and sleep deprivation. Many residents are reluctant to complain, fearing eviction, poor treatment, or being deemed intentionally homeless.

Temporary accommodation, provided by local authorities to households experiencing homelessness, includes social housing, hostels, hotels and bed-and-breakfasts. As of September 2025, 134,760 households - including almost 176,000 children - were living in such ~ accommodation in England. There is currently no requirement for properties to be inspected before families move in, and occupants have limited legal protection.

BPCA welcomes the Committee's recommendations and continues to campaign for safe, pest-free homes for all. BPCA Chief Exec,

Rosina Robson, said: "We welcome the recommendations of the Committee and any actions that can deliver on making sure everyone lives in a safe home, free of pests.

"Pests pose a real risk to both our physical and mental health, which deserves to be taken seriously by all housing providers.

"We should not be allowing anyone, let alone the most vulnerable in our society, to live in such conditions, no matter how 'temporary'".

BPCA contacted all Committee members; one agreed to an MP visit to show how pest management protects communities.

NEW MEMBERS

BPCA British Pest Control Association MEMBER

Servicing members:

- Abate Pest Management
- APC Pest Control Ltd
- Barden Environmental Ltd
- Beam Pest Control
- Catchem Pest Control
- Clearway Pest Control Services
- Clearzone Pest Control Ltd
- D&D Pest Control Ltd
- Ian Earl Ltd
- Frelon Pest Control
- Jeco Pest Control
- KingPest Control & Wildlife Management Ltd
- Newport City Council
- Pestoid Pest Control Ltd
- Pests Controlled Ltd
- Planet Pest Control
- Preston City Council
- Rat King Pest Control
- SHIELD - Pestfreeliving
- Southampton City Council
- Supreme Environmental
- The Bed Bug Queen Ltd
- ZF Fletchers Pest Management

Observer members:

- iGEO ERP Cloud Platform
- JT Eaton Co, Inc
- Natural Wonder Ltd
- Qudrat National Commercial Services
- Truly Nolen International for Pest Control

Associate members:

- ALDI Stores Ltd
- Compliance Services International

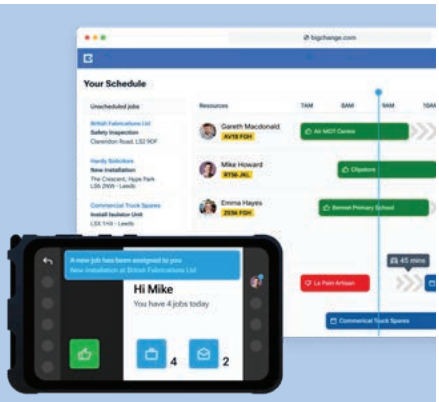
PEST MINDS CIC LAUNCHES VOLUNTEER COMMITTEE AND INVITES INDUSTRY PROFESSIONALS AND SUPPORTERS TO GET INVOLVED

Pest Minds CIC is pleased to announce the formation of its first Volunteer Committee and is inviting passionate individuals to help shape the future of mental health support within the pest management industry.

Since its launch, Pest Minds has been committed to raising awareness of mental health challenges, reducing stigma and encouraging open conversations across the sector. As the organisation continues to grow, a dedicated Volunteer Committee is being established to support its development, strengthen its reach and help deliver meaningful initiatives for those who need them most.

The Committee will play an important role in supporting the strategic direction of Pest Minds, assisting with awareness campaigns, fundraising activities, partnerships, events and community engagement.

Pest Minds is seeking individuals who are passionate about improving mental wellbeing and who can contribute their skills, experience, and enthusiasm to the organisation. Previous committee experience is not essential, and applications are welcomed from people with a variety of backgrounds. If you are interested in becoming a member of the Pest Minds Volunteer Committee, or would simply like to learn more before making a commitment, please email **pestminds@outlook.com** to register your interest and attend the introductory meeting.



BPCA MEMBERS OFFERED 25% DISCOUNT ON BIGCHANGE JOB MANAGEMENT PLATFORM

BPCA members can now claim an exclusive 25% discount on BigChange, the all-in-one job management platform built for field service businesses.

The new member benefit is available to all BPCA members, regardless of business size, and is designed to help pest management companies:

- Reduce admin
- Improve scheduling
- Maintain better visibility into jobs in the field

BigChange brings together key business tasks on a single platform, including scheduling, route optimisation, digital job reports, customer sign-off, invoicing, and real-time engineer tracking.

To claim the 25% discount, BPCA members should email Daniel Armitage at **daniel.armitage@bigchange.com.**

After verifying your membership, Daniel will arrange a demonstration of the system and log the discount to the member's account before the demo.

DEFRA PLEDGES TO LOOK AT MOLE TRAPS – BPCA RESPONDS

Over Christmas, the Government launched its Animal Welfare Strategy, which included a commitment to review mole traps.

The unregulated nature of mole traps has raised concerns about their humane treatment. The government review, which is looking into traps, could potentially affect how these traps are regulated in future.

We have conducted an industry survey to better understand and address these concerns, ensuring that any reform takes our needs into account.

The results confirmed real welfare concerns, with the market full of cheap imitations and knock-offs.

Professionals know what makes a good mole trap, and our Code of Best Practice reinforces that. But the public doesn't know what makes a good mole trap, and these poor-quality traps are available online and in garden centres around the country.

The survey results showed just how specialised mole control was, with over a third (36%) having more than 20 years of experience, and three-quarters having more than five years.

Your feedback reinforced the fact that there are few realistic alternatives to trapping: deterrents don't work, and aluminium phosphide is unpopular.

As this is just a review, the government has not yet committed to taking any action.

However, changes to how mole traps are regulated could be made without primary legislation and would therefore be relatively simple to enact if they were wished.

Based on your feedback, if the government decides to act following its review, BPCA could support adding mole traps to the Spring Trap Approval Orders for England and Wales on a number of conditions.

Read the full story on our website at **ppconline.org**

NATALIE RETURNS TO BPCA IN NEW ROLE AS HEAD OF MEMBERSHIP AND TECHNICAL

Natalie Bungay has returned to BPCA as our new Head of Membership and Technical, bringing with her a wealth of experience and a familiar face to many across the sector.

A well-known figure in pest management and a long-standing advocate for professional standards, Natalie will rejoin BPCA's senior leadership team, heading up the Association's award-winning membership engagement and technical functions.

Natalie previously spent 12 years at BPCA, where she played a key role in shaping technical guidance, supporting members on the ground, and representing the industry in the media.

Many members will recognise her from BPCA webinars, Forums and initial assessments, as well as her regular appearances on TV, radio and in the press.

She returns to BPCA from Pestforce UK, where she has been working as Technical Director.

NO SMALL MATTER REPORT SHOWS PEST MANAGEMENT SAVES UK £1.9BN A YEAR

An independent report commissioned by British Pest Control Association (BPCA) has revealed the economic and social value of professional pest management in the UK.

The No Small Matter report, produced by Pragmatix Advisory, found that professional pest management contributes £1bn a year to the UK economy and saves households and businesses a further £1.9bn a year in direct costs.

Launched ahead of World Pest Day on 6 June, the report gives the sector independent evidence of its impact across public health, housing, food safety, business continuity and essential services.

The report estimates that pest professionals attended more than 4.4 million client jobs in 2025. That is more than 12,000 jobs every day across homes, high streets, hospitals, schools, farms, warehouses and transport hubs.

Residential work made up 31% of the sector's workload, followed by commercial spaces at 16% and food services at 15%. The remaining activity was spread across agriculture, education, healthcare, short-term accommodation, retail and entertainment.

The research also highlights the cost of delayed action. Professional pest control reduces the average cost of an infestation by around £2,000 in complex cases, compared to situations where professional help is not sought. Delaying intervention costs an average of £700 more per case in direct costs.

Rosina Robson, BPCA Chief Executive, said: "We've always known the value pest management provides to society, but we haven't had the data to prove it. This report changes that.

"It gives the sector the evidence it needs to show government, clients and the public that pest management is not just reactive work, but a professional, preventative service that protects health, homes and the economy."

The report found that 64% of pest management is reactive rather than preventative, while around 32% of client jobs involve either significant infestations or emergency response.

It also warns that without pest control intervention, 41% of clients would face reputational damage, while 26% could face legal or enforcement action.

For BPCA and its members, the report is intended to help raise the profile of the sector and support conversations with government, clients and the public.

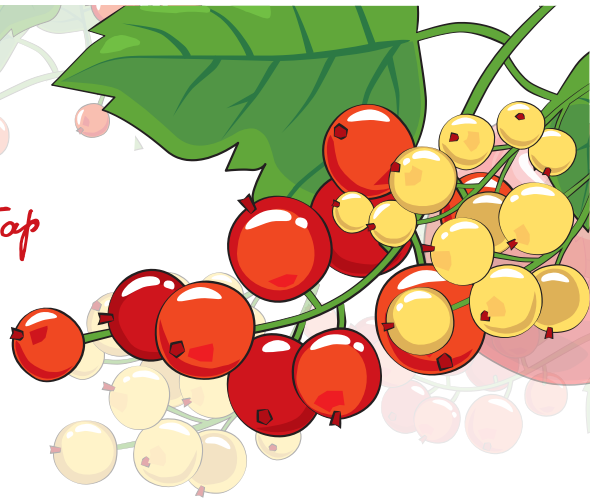
Rosina added: "Professional pest management is a small sector with a nationwide footprint. Policy and decision makers need to give consideration to our sector if they are to achieve optimum outcomes on public health, environmental management and the economy. **bpca.org.uk/small**

Secret Garden

Fruit Fly Monitoring Trap

A New Twist on Insect Traps

→ *Pre-filled*
→ *Easy to use*
→ *Modern design*
→ *No contact with the insects*
→ *Clean*
→ *Non toxic*
→ *Poison-free*
→ *Natural ingredients*
→ *80% plastic reduction*



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PESTS IN POLITICS

Ciaran Breen, BPCA
Policy and Campaigns Officer

Our lobbying and public affairs work currently focuses on three key aims: protecting the toolkit, implementing Awaab's Law and innovation in chemical regulation. In this issue of Pests in Politics, Ciaran talks about the steps forward we've made in engaging with UK Government, Devolved assemblies and MPs.

Rosina Robson, Chief Executive (BPCA), Maya Ellis MP (Ribble Valley), John McCann, Paul McCann and Jack McCann (LES Pest Management) and Ciaran Breen, Policy and Campaigns Officer (BPCA).

PROTECTING THE TOOLKIT

Working dogs

The Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs (Defra) launched their consultation on banning trail hunting, one of the Labour party's manifesto commitments.

Trail hunting started as an alternative to fox hunting which was banned in England and Wales under the Hunting Act 2004. It involves dogs following a pre-laid animal-based scent.

This has lead to instances of foxes being either caught up in this activity and being killed, or accusations that the activity is being used as a smokescreen for illegal fox hunting.

BPCA are responding to the consultation to ensure that the ban does not unintentionally affect the training of working dogs for tasks such as rodent detection.

In the Northern Ireland Assembly a Hunting with Dogs Bill has been introduced which also seeks to ban trail hunting, as well as fox hunting.

Northern Ireland is currently the only part of the UK where there are no restrictions on hunting with dogs.

The private members bill includes exemptions for the hunting of rats and mice, as well as for purposes such as public health. However, we have written to its proposer, John Blair MLA, and other key Assembly members to ensure its definition of trail hunting also protects our work.

Glue traps

It has been announced that Scotland's ban on the use, sale, and possession of rodent glue traps will enter into force 1 July. It will also become illegal to knowingly permit or allow another person to use or sell a glue trap.

The measures were introduced with the Wildlife and Muirburn (Scotland) Act 2024, and falling foul of the ban could result in imprisonment up to 5 years, and or a fine up to £40,000.

There is currently no licensing scheme in place, and BPCA will continue to lobby Scottish Ministers to encourage them to make use of their powers under the Act for this purpose.

Minister for Nature, Mary Creagh MP, has also commented on England's glue trap ban, stating that no formal assessment had been made about its effectiveness in preventing their unlicensed use. She added that the government was confident that their use had reduced overall.

Chemical Regulation

As part of the ongoing negotiations on a future UK-EU Sanitary and Phytosanitary (SPS) Agreement, the government confirmed that the Biocidal Products Regulations (BPR) were being discussed.

BPR governs the authorisation of biocidal products and active substances, and the negotiations "may affect product authorisation, labelling, supply chains and operational practices of organisations across the biocides sector", according to Defra who are leading the negotiations.

BPCA has already responded to a call for information from Defra, and the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) has also published a survey on the costs of regulation.

The agreement is expected to come into effect mid-2027, and the government says that it should make trade "easier, cheaper, and more predictable".

The King's Speech

The King formally re-opened Parliament on the 13th May, giving a speech (written by the Government), on the legislative priorities for the next Parliamentary term. Included were:

- A European Partnership Bill to strengthen EU ties and support treaty implementation
- A proposed Small Business Protections (Late Payments) Bill imposing maximum payment terms of 60 days and mandatory interest on late payments
- A Regulating for Growth Bill to give regulators such as Natural England and the HSE a legal duty to prioritise growth in their decision making
- A commitment to tackle youth unemployment
- An expanded duty for public bodies to consider Armed Forces Covenant in policymaking, as part of the Armed Forces Bill.

OTHER NEWS

- In response to uncertainty and high fuel costs with the war in the Middle East, we wrote to the Trade and Energy Ministers to ensure the needs of the sector were considered in their contingency plans
- We published two manifestos ahead of the May elections in Scotland and Wales
- We ran a survey to seek your views on mole traps. The survey has concluded and we will be using your feedback to inform the Government's review of mole traps which was pledged as part of their Animal Welfare Strategy
- We set up an MPs visit with Maya Ellis MP on the Housing Committee with local member LES pest management (pictured above)
- BPCA responded to a consultation launched by Northern Ireland's Department of Justice, arguing against a proposed increase in firearms licensing fees by 153%.

PESTS IN THE PRESS: FEBRUARY TO APRIL 2026

Kathryn Shaw, BPCA
Public Relations and Publications Manager

Rats and birds have been at the top of the pest news agenda in early spring, with a mix of press releases issued by BPCA garnering coverage and requests for a 'voice of authority' across the media spectrum, from BBC Radio Solent to the Daily Telegraph.

BPCA press releases on rats in winter, gulls in breeding season, and identifying early season bumblebees were featured across regional and national press, while BPCA's calls to the Welsh and Scottish governments ahead of elections in May also attracted plenty of interest.

Responses to breaking news have been a major feature of the last few months, with BPCA approached to comment on news stories including cockroach infestations in student accommodation in Wales, a rodent infestation in a Portsmouth cinema, spider bites, glis glis, flea treatments and pigeons.

Issues around bird netting, particularly in public spaces such as train stations, have been high on the news agenda recently, with BPCA reiterating the message that bird proofing that is installed by trained professionals is a long-term solution that does not pose a risk to pigeons, gulls or other birds when well-maintained.

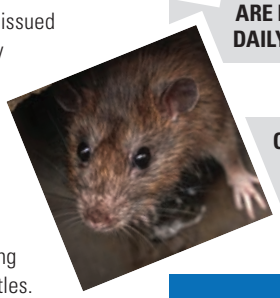
Trade press releases for allied sectors continue to be a regular feature, with an article on fly control issued to food manufacturing and hospitality titles, press releases around PestEx highlighting the event to key sectors and earlier work highlighting the damage rodents can cause to tractors and machinery and raising awareness around pest problems in self-storage units resulting in coverage in farming and storage titles.

Read all about it!
Spot something in the press? Idea for a press release? Tell us.
hello@bpca.org.uk

TOP 3 HEADLINES

THE PLAGUE OF RODENTS TERRORISING THE CHILTERNS, THE DAILY TELEGRAPH

PSYCHO GULLS ARE PECKISH, DAILY STAR



OWNERS RAT-TLED BY RODENT DAMAGE, CLASSIC CAR WEEKLY

TOTAL ARTICLES TO-DATE 426

TOTAL CIRCULATION 2026
222,948,307

THE EMPLOYMENT RIGHTS ACT 2025

THE BIGGEST CHANGE TO EMPLOYMENT RIGHTS IN A GENERATION

Hema Mistry, Director at Quest, outlines the biggest employment law changes coming down the line, what they mean for pest management businesses, and the practical steps employers should start taking now.

These are some of the most significant changes to employment rights that we will see in our lifetime. They affect every organisation in different ways, irrespective of size.

One of the biggest mistakes smaller employers make is assuming employment law applies differently to them, or in some cases, that it doesn't apply to them at all. This is simply not the case. These changes affect small businesses just as much as larger businesses, and unless you take proactive action to implement the legislative changes many SMEs will get caught out without even realising.

This fact sheet is designed to help you focus on what matters most.

What is happening and why

The Labour government described employment reforms as a "new deal for working people". The aim is to make work pay, strengthen worker rights, improve work-life balance and encourage people back into work.

The government launched the Employment Rights Bill soon after they were elected; this outlined the areas of employment law reform they planned to make. On 18 December 2025, the Employment Rights Bill received Royal Assent from the King and therefore it became the Employment Rights Act 2025.

Employment Rights Act 2025 does not replace the Employment Rights Act 1996. Both will sit alongside each other, which may cause some confusion.

Date	Change	What it means
18/02/26	Trade union law changes	Much of the previous government's trade union legislation has been repealed.
06/04/26	Day one right to paternity leave	Employees will qualify for paternity leave from day one, but still need 26 weeks' service for paternity pay.
06/04/26	Day one right to unpaid parental leave	Employees will no longer need one year's service to qualify.
06/04/26	Whistleblowing change	Sexual harassment becomes a qualifying disclosure.
06/04/26	Statutory sick pay reform	SSP from day one, removal of the three waiting days and lower earnings limit. The introduction of a flat SSP rate or payment of 80% where earnings are below the flat SSP rate.
06/04/26	Holiday pay records	Duty on employers to keep holiday and holiday pay records for six years. This was an unexpected change in legislation and announced days before implementation.
07/04/26	Fair Work Agency	New enforcement body with powers to investigate and enforce employment rights.
Aug & Oct 26	Further trade union changes	Many changes concerning TU rights of access to the workplace, gaining recognition, workplace electronic ballets and much more.
Oct 26	Employment tribunal claim time limit	Likely increase from three months to six months.
Oct 26	Third party harassment	Employers liable unless employer can show they took all reasonable steps to prevent this.
Oct 26	Stronger sexual harassment duty	Employers must take "all reasonable steps" rather than just "reasonable steps".
01/01/27	Unfair dismissal reform	Likely unfair dismissal protection after six months, not two years.
2027 onwards	Zero-hours and agency worker changes	More rights around regular hours and cancelled shifts.
2027 onwards	Fire and rehire restrictions	Much tighter limits on changing terms and conditions - this change will be far reaching and impact all companies significantly.
2027 onwards	Flexible Working	Will become default, assume accepted unless employer can prove refusal is reasonable.
2027 onwards	Bereavement Leave	New right to at least 1 week bereavement leave after the loss of a family member.

The changes will come in gradually over the next 12 to 18 months. The first phase of the employment law changes came in February and April 2026, more expected later this year in August and October. Consultation continues in some of the areas of change.

Until enactment of the changes is confirmed the employment law change will not occur, however it is important for all employers to be aware of the expected changes and be proactive in readiness of these coming in.

The changes referred to below relate to Great Britain only, England, Scotland and Wales. Northern Ireland is introducing its own employment law changes which are expected to be confirmed in 2026.

What changes matter most for pest businesses

Day one family rights

From 6 April this year, paternity leave and unpaid parental leave is a day-one right.

That means a new starter is entitled to paternity leave immediately and could ask for unpaid parental leave also. For many employers, these changes will not have significant operational issues, especially if the employer offers enhanced entitlements above the legal minimum. However your policies must be updated, and managers need to understand the distinction between leave entitlement and pay entitlement.

Sexual harassment rules are tightening

Prevention of sexual harassment in the workplace became a legal duty for employers in October 2024. Employers must already take reasonable steps to prevent it, including third party sexual harassment.

From April 2026, sexual harassment is a qualifying disclosure under whistleblowing rules. That strengthens protection for workers who raise concerns.

From October 2026, the duty will become stricter. Employers must show they took all reasonable steps, not just reasonable steps.

That is a much higher bar. For pest management businesses, this matters not only inside your own workplace, but also when technicians are working with clients, contractors and members of the public. The law protects employees from third-party harassment too.

Statutory sick pay (SSP) changes

The SSP changes are some of the most practical and immediate.

SSP is payable from day one of sickness absence from 6 April 2026, with waiting days and the lower earnings limit removed.

For lower-paid employees, SSP is paid at 80% of normal weekly earnings if that is lower than the flat SSP rate.

For employers who only pay SSP and do not offer contractual sick pay, this will have a direct cost impact.

It will increase short-term absence costs, especially for one-day absences and potentially impact on business operations if the absence levels increase

The big issue is absence management. Employers must be much more robust and consistent in how they record, monitor and manage sickness absence.

The changes that could catch employers out later

Six-month unfair dismissal protection

This is the one that will make many employers sit up. Currently, employees usually need two years' service to claim ordinary unfair dismissal. From 1 January 2027, it is expected to reduce to six months. That is a huge shift.

It means recruitment, induction and probation management become even more important. If your probation process is loose, or if you leave issues drifting, you are much more likely to run into problems.

If you have a six-month probation period, you may need to rethink how it works. Ideally, employers should know much earlier whether someone is right for the job.

Compensation caps for unfair dismissal to go

The government is also looking to remove the compensation cap for unfair dismissal. At the moment there is a limit. In future, unfair dismissal compensation may become uncapped in a similar way to discrimination claims.

If that happens, the risk attached to poor procedures and dismissal decisions rises significantly.

Zero-hours and cancelled shifts

The government has stepped back from banning zero-hours contracts outright. But workers on zero-hours or low-hours contracts are expected to gain stronger rights to regular hours if that reflects what they actually work in practice.

There will also be rights linked to cancelled or curtailed shifts, including likely compensation where shifts are cancelled at short notice.

That may be less relevant for some pest businesses than it is for hospitality, but it is still worth watching if you use casual staff, variable-hours workers or agency workers.

Fire and rehire will become much harder

Current rules still allow employers, in some cases, to dismiss and re-engage staff where terms and conditions need to change. That route is going to narrow sharply.

Some proposed changes to terms and conditions, such as reducing pay, changing hours, changing shift patterns or reducing time off, may become "restricted variations". If an employer dismisses someone for refusing those changes, the dismissal may be automatically unfair.

This is a major issue for any employer used to making contractual changes informally or relying on broad flexibility clauses.

What employers should do now

You do not need to panic, but you do need to prepare. Start with the basics:

- Review contracts, policies and procedures
- Make sure your managers understand what is changing
- Tighten up recruitment, induction and probation processes
- Review sickness absence procedures
- Refresh sexual harassment policies, training and reporting routes
- Think about how you handle flexible working requests
- Check how you use casual staff, agency workers and variable-hours arrangements
- Stop assuming "we're too small for that law to apply".

One of the biggest themes running through all of this is culture. These reforms are not just about legal compliance. They are about how employers treat people, how decisions are made and whether businesses can show they acted fairly.

The Employment Rights Act 2025 is not just another update to keep on file and forget about. It will change the way many employers recruit, manage, support and, if necessary, dismiss staff.

For pest management businesses, the practical risks are clear. If your paperwork is out of date, your managers are undertrained, or your processes are inconsistent, these reforms will expose that quickly.

The good news is that there is still time to prepare and get it right. Use that time well.

READY FOR THESE CHANGES? WE CAN HELP

BPCA members have access to Quest's professional HR advice line and templates library for free. To learn how this benefit can support your business, head to: **bpca.org.uk/quest** or contact **membership@bpca.org.uk** for your login details today.

OPINION

WHY WE LOBBY

BPCA's policy and public affairs work often happens quietly in the background. Meetings with officials, consultation responses, briefings for MPs and evidence gathering rarely make headlines, but they shape how government understands pest management.

Rosina Robson, BPCA's Chief Executive, explains why lobbying matters, why it doesn't always go our way, and why the sector still needs a strong voice in Westminster, Cardiff, Edinburgh and Stormont.

Lobbying can sound like a dirty word to some people. It shouldn't.

At its best, lobbying is simply about helping decision makers understand how their policies affect real people and real industries. Governments don't always have detailed knowledge about every sector they regulate, especially one as specialist as pest management. That's where trade associations come in.

BPCA exists to represent the pest management sector. Part of that role is making sure politicians, civil servants and regulators understand the practical realities of protecting public health, managing infestations and running pest management businesses.

Why government needs industry input

Government departments are responsible for huge areas of policy. Officials cannot be experts in every industry, chemical, treatment method or operational challenge.

That means they rely on evidence from businesses, trade bodies, scientists, charities and campaign groups to help shape decisions.

A policy that looks sensible on paper can create unintended consequences if decision makers don't understand how pest professionals actually work.

Our job is to explain those realities clearly and professionally.

We take an evidence-based approach to lobbying. That means using member feedback, case studies, survey data and technical expertise to help inform government thinking.

Much of our recent work has focused on the three priorities in BPCA's Manifesto for Government ahead of the last General Election:

- Protecting the toolkit and promoting professionalism
- Supporting the implementation of Awaab's Law
- Reducing barriers to chemical innovation.

For example, we're currently feeding evidence into the government's review of mole trapping. That includes member insights, survey data and case studies explaining how traps are used in practice.

At PestEx, officials from Defra and the Animal and Plant Health Agency (APHA) attended to speak directly with members. The feedback from those conversations was positive, with officials saying they found the opportunity genuinely useful.

That's lobbying too. Sometimes it's formal consultation responses. Sometimes it's simply about creating opportunities for decision-makers to hear directly from professionals.

Why doesn't it always go our way

Of course, lobbying is not about getting everything you want.

Sometimes governments make decisions based on political priorities, public pressure or wider policy agendas that outweigh industry concerns. Glue boards are a good example.

Officials made it clear to us early in the process that ministers had already decided licensing would only be allowed in exceptional circumstances. Civil servants were then tasked with delivering that policy position.

At that point, it became important to engage directly with ministers and senior decision makers. BPCA held conversations with Defra ministers, including George Eustice and Lord Goldsmith, during the debate around glue board legislation.

But lobbying becomes difficult when the political direction is already firmly established. Wales had already moved towards a ban, Scotland followed a similar route, and the current political climate remains heavily influenced by animal welfare campaigning. That doesn't mean you stop making the case.

We continue to explain the operational reality of working without glue boards and the challenges created by the current licensing system, particularly where emergency use may be necessary.

We've submitted Environmental Information requests to better understand how licensing is operating in practice. We're also working with the Chartered Institute of Environmental Health (CIEH) and other stakeholders to provide evidence around urban pest pressures and public health risks.

Why having a voice still matters

Sometimes progress does happen. The Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) has sought BPCA's advice while developing guidance around Awaab's Law. More recently, the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) has also reached some constructive conclusions on future chemical regulation, although there is still work to do.

The pest management toolkit is under pressure. Regulation is changing. Public expectations are changing too. That's exactly why the sector needs strong representation.

Policy positions can shift over time. Ministers change. Governments change. New evidence emerges. Public opinion changes direction. Successful lobbying often takes years.

Sometimes an opportunity appears because the right minister takes an interest. Sometimes it comes from building a strong evidence base over time.

Sometimes it happens because several organisations work together to present a united position. Campaigning rarely delivers instant wins.

But if the sector isn't part of the conversation, decisions will still be made, just without our input.

BPCA has just launched the No Small Matter report, alongside tools to help members contact their MPs directly. When pest management speaks with a clear, professional, and evidence-based voice, government is far more likely to listen.

BPCA EMAIL technical@bpca.org.uk

INBOX
SENT
ARCHIVE
BIN
SPAM

ASK THE TECHNICAL TEAM

Is BPCA doing anything to get Ficam D back?

We understand that there was a lot of disappointment about the loss of this product, but unfortunately, BPCA has no remit over product withdrawals. Removing Ficam D from the market was the manufacturer's decision. Envu UK announced the withdrawal of Ficam D (Bendiocarb) from the UK market in 2024 due to "regulatory measures".

Envu stated that new BPR registration rules following Brexit made it very difficult for them to keep products such as Ficam D on the market.

What we can do as your trade association is lobby for a chemical sector that prioritises public health and innovation. Post-Brexit, the cost and complexity of registering and renewing products in the UK make it harder for manufacturers to keep products on the market. By creating evidence through original research, engaging with academics, and speaking to policymakers, BPCA works to keep products on the shelves and ensure innovations around the world reach UK pest professionals.

Waste and quarterly returns: why do I need to do them? I've never done them before, so why now?

Each organisation is legally responsible for managing and disposing of its own waste in line with local legislation in England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland. This sits under the Duty of Care requirements.

The Duty of Care places a legal responsibility on anyone who produces, carries, keeps, treats or disposes of controlled waste to make sure it is handled correctly, from the point it is produced through to final recovery or disposal. This includes checking that any waste carrier or disposal company used is correctly authorised.

This isn't a new thing – you should have always been doing this and if you need pointing in the right direction, we can give you a hand.

Why are glue traps still available to the public?

It's important to get it right according to which devolved nation we're referring to here. Glue traps for rodents are still available for sale to the public in England, as the legislation focused on restricting their use rather than their sale.

Recent legislative updates, such as the United Kingdom Internal Market Act 2020 (Exclusions from Market Access Principles: Glue Traps) Regulations 2025, have been introduced to exclude glue traps from "market access principles". This means devolved nations could enforce a full ban on the sale of these items without interference from UK-wide trade rules.

Nation	Use	Sales
England	Banned for public use; professionals can still use them under a strict individual licensing scheme	Not banned
Scotland	Implementing a full ban on use, possession, and sale, expected to be fully in force by July 2026.	
Wales	Banned	Not banned
Northern Ireland	No legislation or limitations (however, the PMA Code of Best Practice for Glue Boards should be used at all times).	

While it's frustrating to see these items still available to buy in England, remember that their use is restricted. If you see unlicensed people using glue traps, you can call the non-emergency police number and report it as a wildlife crime. BPCA will continue to lobby for the restriction on sales for the general public across the UK.

If you see any evidence of glue traps being used illegally, then be sure to contact **policy@bpca.org.uk** so we can show Defra how these traps are continuing to be used incorrectly. Be sure to include whether you found the example in England, Scotland or Wales.

Are you a BPCA member with a technical question? Get in touch...

BPCA MEMBERS ONLY

technical@bpca.org.uk
01332 225 104
x.com/britpestcontrol

WHO YOU GONNA CALL?

The members of our technical team are happy to come out to visit sites with BPCA members who are struggling with a tough infestation and need hands-on advice. Get in touch!

BPCA LEVEL UP PestEx Roundup

From sleek and stylish to engaging and fun, PestEx 2026 gave visitors to the expo a huge range of activities, product demos, networking opportunities and games over two days in London. In a world where we're all striving to demonstrate professionalism, this year's theme was about levelling up and delivering more. PPC reporter Natalie Wakefield gives a rundown of PestEx and why it's the jewel in our events crown.

PestEx played host to around 2,100 people and over 1,600 visitors between 18 and 19 March this year, for the UK's biggest pest control event.

Held at London's Excel Centre, the event brought together delegates from all over the globe to network, discover new products, and attend seminars and debates on pest management and business topics.

More than 125 pest management manufacturers and distributors packed out the exhibition hall with incredible-looking stands, fantastic new products and creative games with giveaways for winners.

With everything from specially crafted computer games to hammering nails into a hunk of wood and a full-on Wild West Saloon, the event offered visitors every opportunity to immerse themselves in the world of professional pest control.

Networking

The coffee lounge, sponsored by Bell Laboratories was a central point for networking and refuelling for visitors over a busy two days.

It played host to a Young Professionals meeting, attended by BPCA Chief Exec Rosina Robson and Chair of BPCA's EDI Committee, Julia Pittman.

Rosina commented, "PestEx is the best opportunity pest professionals get to forge new partnerships, build lasting business relationships and make connections. That exchange of knowledge and ideas is so important for professionals both experienced and new. We particularly wanted to get to know the new faces in the industry and it was a really productive conversation."

Gaining XP

Delegates enhanced their learning and earnt CPD points by attending panel discussions and talks in the Technical Theatre (sponsored by Syngenta Advion) and the Spotlight Theatre (sponsored by Dot).

The event's debate sessions very well-attended, with topics such as delivering pest control specifications, working with EHOs, insecticide resistance and smarter surveying techniques.

An explosive debate session on selling your pest business was well-received, with lots of interaction from the audience.

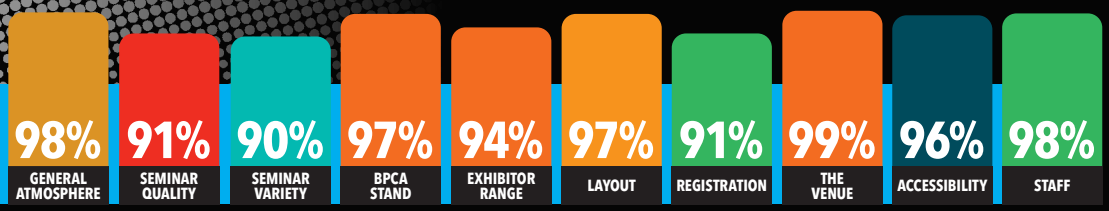
In the Technical Theatre, there was a talk on wood boring insects with Nicholas Donnithorpe (Rentokil) which got great feedback.

There was also a very warm reception for what could have been a difficult subject on being more 'wasp positive' with Professor Seirian Sumner: see pages 22-23 for details.

Even some of the more HR and business topics, which weren't the most highly attended, received glowing feedback. On Hema Mistry's talk regarding the Employment Rights Act changes, one person said, "It's the best seminar I've seen over the two days".

PESTEX IN NUMBERS

PestEx 2026 as rated by visitors and exhibitors... GOOD/ EXCELLENT



Were your expectations met or exceeded by PestEx? **95%** REPLIED YES

Would exhibitors recommend PestEx to customers? **100%** REPLIED YES

How likely is it that you will attend PestEx 2028? **96%** REPLIED YES

"I enjoyed PestEx and appreciated the variety of product showcases. It was useful to see the range of products available for different pests".

Next level games

The Pelsis practical proofing's speediest hogringing challenge helped set the tone for what was probably the most competitive PestEx ever. Among the most memorable activities at PestEx was Defender Bird Spikes' hammer competition. The rules were simple: using just one hand, hammer a nail into a hunk of wood in the fewest hits. And if you want to, knock back a cheeky drink to celebrate.

Supreme Environmental had a PS5 up for grabs for top scorers in their darts challenge, while Killgerm were celebrating 50 years with a prize draw for a Harrods hamper, as well as announcing the Golden Ticket Easter Bonanza – in April purchasers who found a golden ticket after buying BASF products through Killgerm were in line to win a prize ranging from a chocolate egg to an exclusive factory tour.

And the fun continued with delegates testing their observation skills, with PestWest's Spot the AI Fly game as well as taking on the Opti-Catch's fastest EFK retrofit challenge and Cliverton Insurance Brokers spin the wheel giveaway.

Living up to the theme 'Are you ready to level up?' BPCA attracted gamers of all ages with Resistance Wars 2: Double Resistance – a bespoke computer game designed exclusively with pest professionals in mind. Attendees tried their hand at a top-down dungeon crawler-style game, fending off various mutated pests.

Debuts and demonstrations

With more than 125 exhibitors in attendance, PestEx 2026 had a wealth of new products, innovations and developments on display for delegates to explore, from proofing and prevention methods to non-toxic solutions, scents and pheromones, lasers, blockers, IPM technology and more.

Man's best friend was teaching delegates about the work of specially trained sniffer dogs at Merlin Environmental's stand, which was set up like a classroom ready for bed bug scent to be laid and the cutest exhibitors to get to work.

Another stand-out demonstration was the diorama of an infestation, featuring live specimens, put together by Dr Richard Naylor of the Bed Bug Foundation.

With part of a bed, bedding and bedroom ephemera under a sealed glass dome, visitors could see the bed bugs in-situ, while learning about species identification and the work of the foundation too.

Dr Naylor said: "Our website offers a free specimen identification service and over the last year we've responded to 1,800 emails.

"A big part of every day is helping people to figure out whether what they've found is a bed bug, as roughly 80 per cent are actually something else."

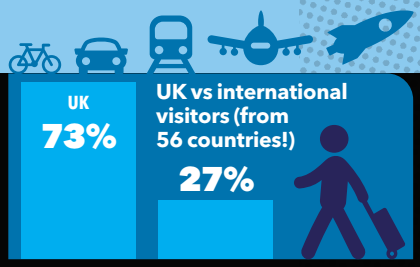
Among some of the wide range of products on display across the exhibition hall were non-toxic pest control in the form of scents and pheromones from Russell IPM, Xcluder's stainless steel foam material and universal escutcheon plate for rodent proofing, along with Raxit Seals range of stainless steel wool barrier with diamond infused non-hardening core and copper vacuum insulation.

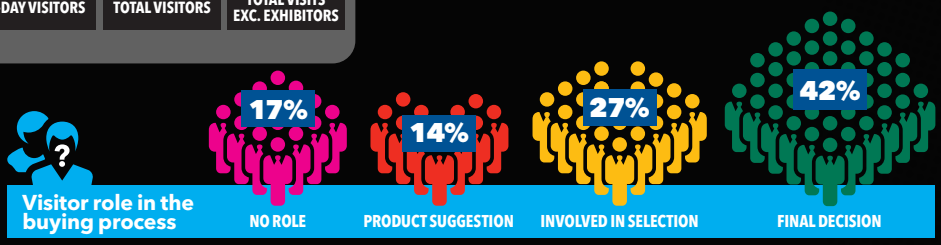
PestFix were showcasing smart traps and use of AI in their connected tech corner, along with bird control, netting, solar panel mesh and bio acoustic solutions.

/continued...

	PRE-REGISTERED VISITORS	DAY 1 VISITORS	DAY 2 VISITORS	2-DAY VISITORS	TOTAL VISITORS	TOTAL VISITS EXC. EXHIBITORS
2019	2,109	1,448	935	332	2,383	2,715
2022	2,691	920	540	208	1,460	1,668
2024	2,791	1,207	720	318	1,609	1,927
2026	2,676	1,162	780	428	1,621	1,942

The development of PestEx since 2019





"Wonderful atmosphere, with more knowledge there than ever before and full of people who are just as passionate about pest control as I am!"

The team also introduced Barry the Bee, a companion for Ruth the Roach, who made his debut at PestEx.

Rich Faulkner at ENVU gave insightful on-stand talks throughout the two days, while the broad range of product options were also front and centre for major players at PestEx including Barrettine, 1env, Syngenta, Bell Labs and PelGar.

International innovation

New ideas from overseas were a key part of the expo, with a wide range of products and services on show from exhibitors across the globe.

US-based JT Eaton & Co Inc were exhibiting at PestEx for the first time. Emma Knight, e-commerce and marketing, said: "Today we are showing our range of discreet pest control products.

"We're really hoping to connect with as many people as possible including UK distributors."

Danish company Nordisk Innovations were showcasing their professional use rat blocker which is made of acid-free stainless steel and consists of two independent wings - which allow it to expand to fit inside pipes of different diameters - and a rotating double gate locking system.

David Ravnkilde said: "It's a relatively new business and we've partnered with a distributor so we're really trying to make an extra push in the UK to extend the market and talk about what proofing and protection can do compared to treatment, balanced with the demands of using a non-toxic approach."

Non-toxic was a hot topic at PestEx with Shenzen Visson Technology Co Ltd promoting their non-toxic mouse trap and Zepta.io demonstrating their digital monitoring system, which uses an app to monitor weighted bait stations that can indicate points of travel and species to allow 24/7 monitoring.

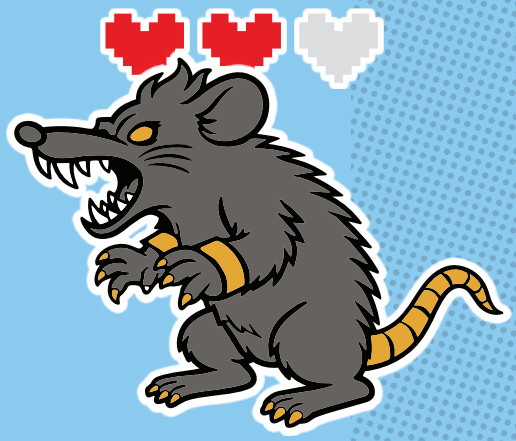
Australian start-up PestSense were also debuting their digital solution range including smart rodent station Predictor and OneCloud interface and Aussie Ezy Spray Pros – designed by Australian David Read, made its debut on the Lodi stand.

Allessandro Piovesan from Screen Birds, a family-owned business based in Italy, was introducing Clip Fast, a new solution a universal clip system especially for the UK market, which works with barriers and wire mesh to stop birds getting under solar panels.

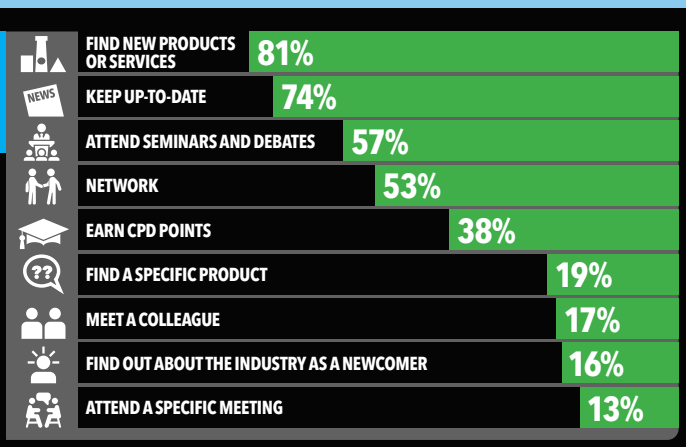
Business focus

Among the support services for businesses was Inbervel, a pilot business growth system founded by Graham Clarke and John Dickson, which launched at PestEx.

Advanced Vehicle Leasing were showing their 'whole solution' options for transport, setting out options for cars and vans for lease, which arrived fully kitted as required to the door.



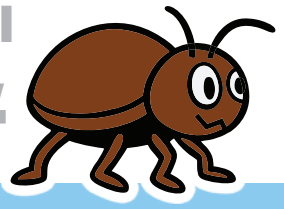
WHY DID PEOPLE ATTEND?



Top ways to hear about PestEx

1. EMAIL INVITE 21%
2. WORD OF MOUTH 16%
3. BPCA WEBSITE bpca.org.uk 15%
4. SOCIAL MEDIA 10%
5. SENT BY EMPLOYER 10%
6. PPC MAGAZINE 5%

"I like that we can meet the suppliers and see the physical products on the shelf rather than in a catalogue. Also, to actually meet people and speak face-to-face!"



Organisations that work with or alongside BPCA, through campaigns, partnerships, provision of member benefits or regulation were also represented at PestEx, including TrustMark, Royal Society for Public Health, Animal and Plant Health Agency's Non-Native Species Secretariat, Campaign for Responsible Rodenticide Use, Rodenticide Resistance Action Group, Quest and the Department for Work and Pensions.

Welfare and wellbeing

Highlighting the importance of wellbeing and mental health support was Pest Minds, the growing initiative launched by Anna Mollins of Veritas Pest Consultancy.

Anna said: "This is the first time at PestEx for Pest Minds as a Community Interest Company - before it was just an idea.

"I'm here to spread awareness of Pest Minds and make connections, have those conversations with people about how important this type of support is to the industry."

Physical health is at the centre of a study being conducted by Middlesex University London, which had a team at PestEx to highlight a planned feasibility study exploring workplace exposures and respiratory health.

Practical welfare was also a consideration at the GVS stand, where the Elipse Full Face Mask was among the PPE products on display.

And welfare concerns don't stop at people. Karl Robertson, CEO of the Raptor Awards CEO and HF Pest & Bird Environmental said: "We're about raptor welfare in the pest control industry.

"My speciality is working with birds of prey, and I aligned with the Raptor Awards on certification for those who keep, train and work with raptors."

And after all that, those who needed a pick-me-up during a packed two days had the option to pop over to LODI UK's Wild Wild Pest – a fantastic saloon bar with give-aways and products on display and a choice of bespoke beers, including Razzled Rat and Crawler.

Lauren Day, Events Manager at BPCA, said: "PestEx is the pinnacle of our events calendar, and once again, we were blown away to see all the effort our exhibitors put into making their stands exciting and engaging. The energy in the hall was electric, and we couldn't do it without their enthusiasm and support.

"PestEx 2026 has been the biggest show yet; we expanded the floor plan, filled the theatres with more speakers than ever and gave ourselves a huge challenge. And we absolutely smashed it!"

"We also couldn't bring PestEx to life without the support of our seminar speakers and debate panels, who delivered an amazing programme of discussions and technical content - a huge thank you to them."

Rosina Robson, BPCA's Chief Executive, was thrilled with her first PestEx experience, commenting: "There was an incredible atmosphere in the exhibition hall over the two days. PestEx is a truly unique industry event; you really don't get a better chance to meet this many pest professionals, suppliers, manufacturers, business owners, specifiers, government departments and member benefit providers under one roof in the UK.

"It was an absolute pleasure connecting with so many industry professionals at PestEx 2026. From in-depth discussions on legislation to quick catch-ups on the floor, thank you to everyone who took the time to speak with me."

She continued: "Being new to the industry, I was encouraged by the number of international exhibitors and visitors. We welcomed guests from sister associations such as the African Pest Control Association (APCA) and Associazione Imprese Disinfestazione Professionali Italiane (AIDPI), international journalists from publications such as German magazine DpS, and exhibitors from countries like Greece, Turkey, India, China, the US, and many more. It's a truly international event!

"Thanks again to everyone who made PestEx 2026 so memorable, and we look forward to seeing you again in 2028."

"Thanks again to everyone who made PestEx 2026 so memorable, and we look forward to seeing you again in 2028."

Data dive: WHAT THE 2025 BPCA FUTURE OF PEST MANAGEMENT SURVEY TELLS US

Fergal Flynn, PPM Services, spoke at PestEx on behalf of BPCA's Academic Relations Working Group. Fergal looks at what the 2025 Future of Pest Management survey tells us about resistance, trapping, rodenticides, regulation and where the sector might be heading next.

We first ran the BPCA Future of Pest Management survey in 2023. We ran it again in 2025, over a few weeks in October and November, and this article gives you a bit of a dive into what has changed, what has stayed the same, and what might need a closer look next time.

I'm part of BPCA's Academic Relations Working Group. It was originally Paul Westgate's initiative, and has grown into a really interesting group of BPCA members, lecturers and academics. We're meant to talk about surveys, studies and research links with universities, although quite often we end up talking about random pest control things. Very interesting meetings, if that's your sort of thing.

In 2025, we had 473 respondents, compared with 816 in 2023. Fewer people, but still enough to draw useful conclusions. We covered trapping, monitoring, glue boards, rodenticide use, regulation, licensing, behavioural resistance and physiological resistance.

Figures are averaged across respondents, so percentages may not total 100%.

Who answered?

It's worth starting with who actually filled in the survey, as it affects how we interpret the data.

Role

OWNER / SENIOR MANAGER	55.6%
PEST TECHNICIAN	37.2%
OTHER	7%

Experience (years)

20+	41%
11-20	26.4%
6-10	19.7%
1-5	11.6%
<1	1.3%

Most respondents were owners, senior managers or pest control technicians. We also saw a lot of experience in the results. Around **41%** had more than 20 years in the industry, and **26.4%** had 11 to 20 years. That fits with what we already know about the sector: a lot of knowledge sits with people who have been doing this for a long time.

98%
hold formal pest control qualifications.
Up from **97%** in 2023.

17%
hold advanced qualifications.
Up from **14%** in 2023.

Qualifications were strong. In 2025, **98%** of respondents held formal pest control qualifications, up from **97%** in 2023. RSPH Level 2 AiPM or the BPC Diploma remains the standard qualification. We also saw **17%** holding advanced qualifications, up from **14%** in 2023. Company size is important too. Sole traders were the largest single group, rising from **26%** in 2023 to **30%** in 2025.

So, when we look at this data, we need to remember that it is strongly shaped by smaller businesses. That's not a problem, because smaller businesses make up a huge part of the sector, but it is worth keeping in mind.

Where the work is

Residential work accounted for about a third of jobs, at **32.4%**. Commercial and industrial work made up **18.5%**, and food services **16%**. Then you've got agriculture, education, retail, short-term accommodation, healthcare and entertainment making up the rest.

Average proportion of jobs by sector

RESIDENTIAL	32.4%
COMMERCIAL / INDUSTRIAL	18.5%
FOOD SERVICES	16%
AGRICULTURAL	9%
EDUCATION	8.8%
RETAIL	8.4%
SHORT-TERM ACCOMMODATION	7.8%
HEALTHCARE	6%
OTHER	5.3%

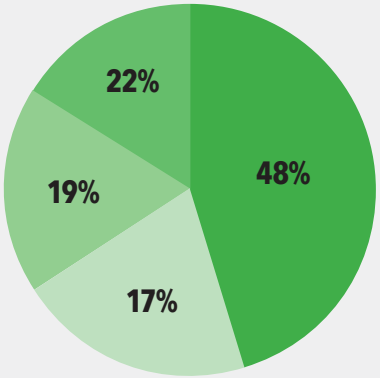
That probably won't surprise many people. Most of us know that residential, commercial and food work are a big chunk of the day-to-day industry.

What is interesting is the split between routine work and active infestations.

Across the survey, **48%** of work was routine monitoring or maintenance. Another **41%** involved active infestations requiring treatment, and **17%** were emergency responses.

That tells an important story. Pest management is not just turning up when something has gone badly wrong. Almost half the work captured here is routine monitoring or maintenance. In other words, prevention at scale.

"Recording whether you're catching juveniles or adults can tell you more about the population you're dealing with. It can also help separate your reporting from someone who just writes "two mice caught".



- Routine monitoring
- Minor infestation
- Significant infestation
- Emergency response

Delays cost money and create risk

We asked pest professionals what happens when clients delay intervention or try to go down their own route.

Reputational Damage
68%
Weighted avg 6.78/10 likelihood

Health Risk
64%
Weighted avg 6.39/10 likelihood

Financial Loss
65%
Weighted avg 6.48/10 likelihood

Longer Disruption
62%
Weighted avg 6.22/10 likelihood

In a commercial setting, a pest issue can very quickly become a business issue. What happens if it ends up on Facebook? What happens if word gets around? What happens if a problem that could have been nipped in the bud turns into something that needs closure, extra visits or a much bigger intervention?

The sectors where respondents were most likely to report escalation after delayed response were residential, at **72.7%**, and food services, at **70.9%**. That also lines up with what we see in practice. In housing, you may have housing officers involved. In food premises, you may have environmental health officers. There are clearer enforcement routes, and problems can become formal quite quickly.

Overall, the message is simple: pest professionals see the value of early intervention. The sooner we are involved, the better the outcome is likely to be.

Trapping and monitoring

The trapping data was very similar to 2023.

60%
Use traps for monitoring (internally, externally, or both)
2023: **65%**

58%
Routinely bait traps with some form of lure
2023: **63%**

78%
Routinely change lure/bait during deployment
2023: **76%**

86%
Use traps in tunnels or stations
2023: **87%**

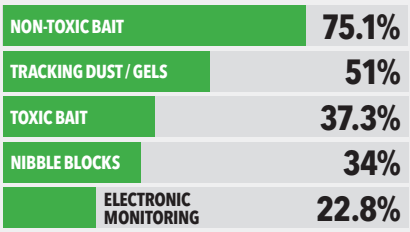
89%
Note numbers caught
2023: **85%**

40%
Record approximate age (juvenile/adult)
2023: **42%**

In 2025, **60%** of respondents used traps for monitoring, either internally, externally or both. But only **58%** routinely baited traps with some form of lure. So, more than four in ten people using traps were not routinely using a lure.

That's a useful point for technicians to reflect on. If you're putting traps into boxes with no lure, are you giving yourself the best chance?

Methods used for routine monitoring



The positive news is that **78%** routinely changed lure or bait during deployment, **86%** used traps in tunnels or stations, and **89%** recorded numbers caught. Only **40%** recorded approximate age, such as juvenile or adult.

That's one of those small things that can add value to reporting. Recording whether you're catching juveniles or adults can tell you more about the population you're dealing with. It can also help separate your reporting from someone who just writes "two mice caught".

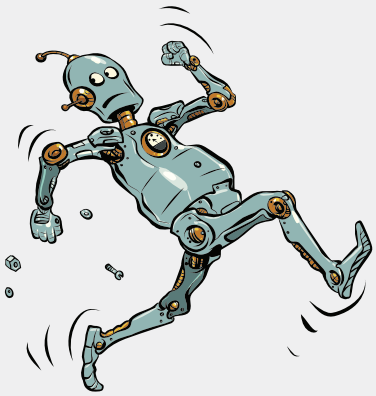
Trap avoidance remains an issue. In 2025, **15%** said they experienced trap avoidance often, up from **11.5%** in 2023.

15%
experience trap avoidance 'Often'

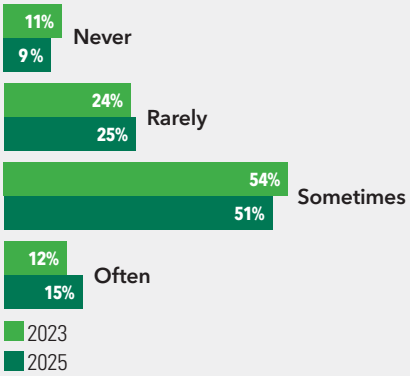
up from **11.5%** in 2023

Top cited causes:
Neophobia, alternative food sources, prior DIY trapping attempts, plastic box avoidance.

Now, we need to be cautious. Different people answered each survey, so we should not overclaim. But we can say trap avoidance is definitely something pest professionals are seeing.



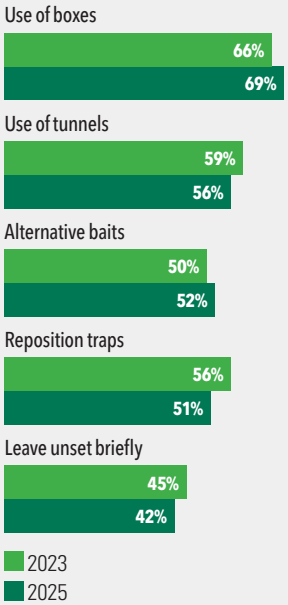
Control failure from trap avoidance



The top cited causes were neophobia, alternative food sources, prior DIY trapping attempts and plastic box avoidance.

When people try to improve trap success, they are mainly using boxes, tunnels, alternative baits, repositioning traps and leaving traps unset briefly. Those are practical, grounded responses, and they show technicians adapting to what they see on site.

What measures professionals use to improve trap capture likelihood



Resistance is not just one thing

Resistance was one of the most interesting parts of the survey.

In 2025, **82%** said they had encountered some form of resistance, up from **77%** in 2023. Also, 49% correctly described resistance as all forms of rodent non-engagement, up from **44%**.

82%
have encountered some form of resistance
Up from **77%** in 2023

49%
describe resistance as all forms of rodent non-engagement
Correct understanding improving - up from **44%**

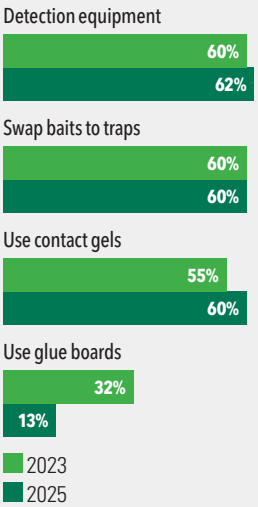
That matters because resistance is not just physiological resistance. It can be behavioural too. It can be reluctance to engage with bait boxes, reluctance to take baits in boxes, or reluctance to engage with traps.

Behavioural resistance was the most commonly encountered type, reported by **62%**. Of those, **59%** had experienced it in both rats and mice. The top behaviours were reluctance to engage with bait boxes, at **72%**, reluctance to engage with baits in boxes, at **61%**, and reluctance to engage with traps, also at **61%**.

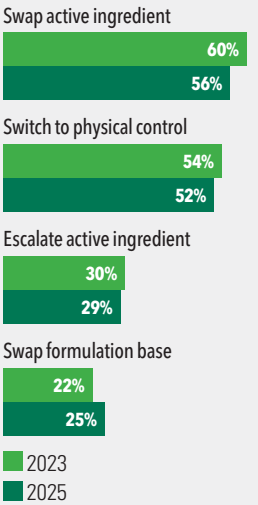
Physiological or metabolic resistance was reported by **43%**. Most respondents were aware of resistance status checks, including tail sampling. The top responses to physiological resistance were swapping active ingredient, switching to physical control and escalating active ingredient.

What professionals do when encountering resistance

Behavioural resistance

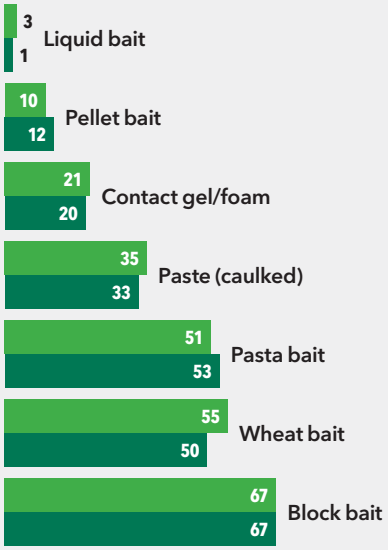


Physiological resistance



One interesting point is that **25%** said they swap formulation base when dealing with physiological resistance. That might help palatability, but it does not necessarily deal with physiological resistance. If the active ingredient is the same, changing from pasta to grain does not change the resistance issue. That suggests there is still some education to do.

Rodenticide use is changing



% using 'Often' or 'Always'

Block bait remains the most commonly used formulation, with **67%** using it often or always. Wheat bait and pasta bait follow. Liquid bait is rarely used.

The survey also showed a useful split between internal and external second-generation anticoagulant rodenticide use.

Brodifacoum dominated internally, ranked number one by **41%**. Bromadiolone led externally, ranked number one by **32%**.

That is good to see; it suggests many pest professionals are matching products to risk. The more persistent, more bioaccumulative products are being used more cautiously.

Anticoagulants are still the main go-to product. In 2025, **66%** ranked them as the most palatable and effective. But cholecalciferol is growing. It rose from **22%** ranked number one in 2023 to **26%** in 2025, and usage often or always rose from **28%** to **38%**.

Ranked by palatability and effectiveness

Anticoagulant

66%

ranked #1 most palatable

Score: 2.63/3 2023: 2.67
2023: 70% ranked #1

Still preferred #1 but declining

Cholecalciferol

26%

ranked #1 most palatable

Score: 2.18/3 2023: 2.12
2023: 22% ranked #1

Growing adoption – up from 22%

Alphachloralose

7%

ranked #1 most palatable

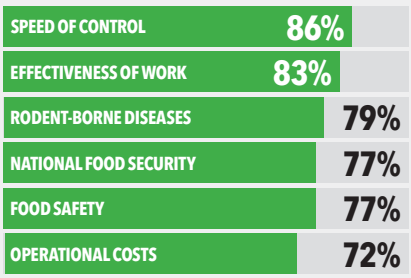
Score: 1.51/3 2023: 1.56
2023: 7% ranked #1

Niche use – 48% never use

That feels like a real shift. It may reflect changes to SGAR labels, regulatory pressure and technicians looking for different tools.

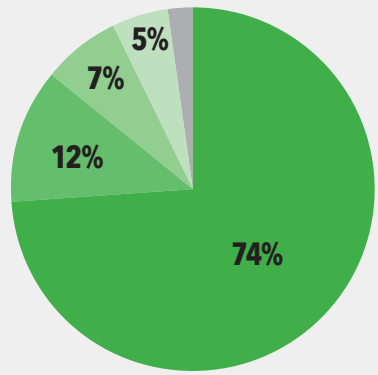
Protecting the toolkit

We asked what would happen if anticoagulant rodenticides were removed or restricted. The responses were strong.



% saying 'Much worse' or 'Somewhat worse'

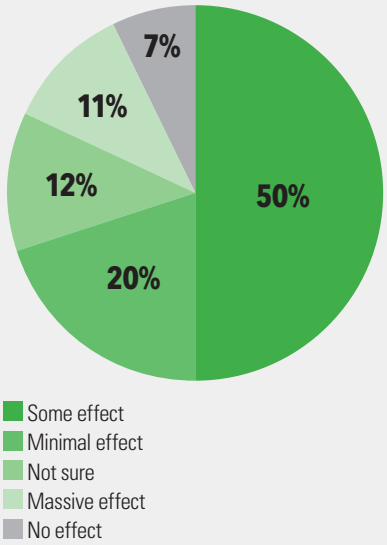
Respondents said speed of control would be worse, at **86%**, effectiveness of work worse, at **83%**, rodent-borne diseases worse, at **79%**, and food safety worse, at **77%**. If SGARs were banned externally, **86%** predicted decreased rat control, with **74%** predicting a significant decrease.



This is important data. Pest professionals are saying that losing tools would affect speed, effectiveness, public health and food safety. That matters when regulators or agencies suggest alternatives can simply replace rodenticides.

People also reported that the open areas rule change is already being felt.

Has the change in rules about using SGARs in open areas negatively affected public health?

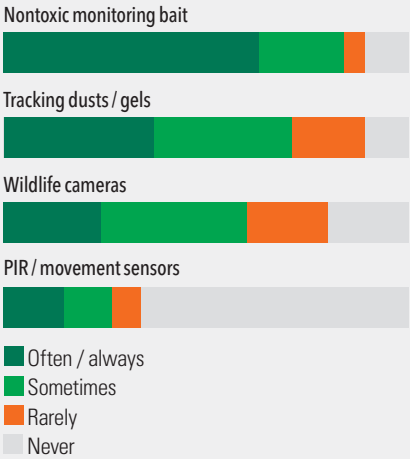


In 2025, **61%** said it had some or massive negative effect on public health, although this was lower than the **77.5%** who predicted an effect in 2023. That is still not a small number.

Technology is growing, but slowly

Non-toxic monitoring bait remains common, used often or always by **63%**. Tracking dusts and gels were at **37%**. Wildlife cameras were at **24%**, and PIR or movement sensors at **15%**.

Non-lethal monitoring devices used during rodent treatments



We are seeing more technology on the market, and walking around PestEx you could see plenty of it. Personally, if I'm dealing with a complicated rodent issue, having a camera in a loft can make a real difference. It helps you see where rodents are moving and where to focus your attention. I'd expect this area to keep growing.

The future looks harder

Will rodent control be easier or harder in 5 years?

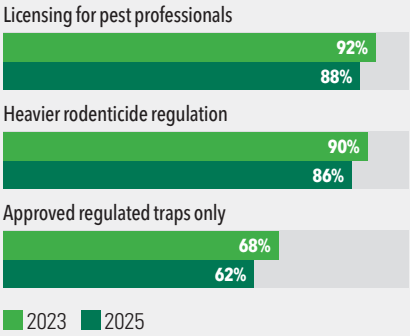
88%

believe rodent control will be harder in 5 years' time
(53% say much harder, 35% somewhat harder)

In 2025, **88%** of respondents said rodent control will be harder in five years' time. That is almost unchanged from 2023. At the same time, there is strong support for regulation.

In 2025, **88%** supported licensing for pest professionals, **86%** supported heavier rodenticide regulation, and **62%** supported approved regulated traps only.

There was also **98%** support for banning unqualified buyers, **93%** support for tighter restrictions on sellers, and **84%** support for mandatory CPD.



That tells me pest professionals see the value in what they do. They want the toolkit protected, but they also want the industry to be professional, competent and properly recognised.

The survey is not perfect, and there is more to unpack, including insects and better segmentation by location, company type and demographics.
The message is clear: pest professionals prevent financial loss, protect public health and manage problems early. Resistance is becoming more visible. Cholecalciferol use is rising, technology is growing, and rodent control is expected to get harder. There is strong support for licensing and tighter control over who can buy and sell professional products. We need to keep building the evidence.

TAKE RESEARCH SERIOUSLY AND WANT TO GET INVOLVED?

BPCA's Academic Relations Working Group is at the forefront of protecting your toolkit and supporting our evidence-based policy work. Want to join in?
hello@bpca.org.uk

WHY WE SHOULD BE MORE WASP-POSITIVE

Professor Seirian Sumner, University College London, studies wasps for a living. In this article, she explains why pest professionals are uniquely positioned to help society think differently about wasps, without pretending that every nest in every loft should be left exactly where it is.

I should probably start by admitting that PestEx 2026 may have been the most difficult audience I will ever speak to about wasps.

I'm used to giving popular science talks to members of the public about why wasps matter. I'm a behavioural ecologist at University College London, and I study wasps for a living. My life is as entwined with wasps as yours is, although perhaps from a rather different angle.

You deal with wasps when they are in people's lofts, sheds, walls and gardens. I deal with them because I think they are beautiful, fascinating and important. Somewhere between those two worlds, I think there is a conversation worth having.

I am not here to pretend that there aren't wasp nests that need 'management'. Nobody likes a wasp nest in the wrong place. Some people are frightened. Some are at risk. Some nests are simply not compatible with people safely using a building.

But I do want to ask whether we can be more wasp-positive. Not wasp-naive. Wasp-positive.

The gangsters of the insect world

The common yellowjacket wasp is no stranger to pest controllers. You are, in fact, a privileged sector of society, because you get to see these animals close up. Most people do not. Most people see a wasp and think one word: sting.

A few years ago, we asked members of the public what words came to mind when they thought about wasps. The dominant word was, unsurprisingly, sting. Fair play. Wasps do sting.

But then we asked the same question about bees. Bees sting too, of course, but the words people used were very different. Honey. Flowers. Pollination. Nature. The word sting was used, but much less frequently.

That difference matters; people tolerate bee stings because they understand what bees do. They know bees matter. They have a story for bees. Wasps have not been given the chance to tell their story. They are viewed as the gangsters of the insect world. They inspire bad language, terrible horror films and a general sense that the world would be better off without them. I don't think that is fair. More importantly, I don't think it is ecologically sensible.

We need to talk about the Asian hornet

Before I get too carried away with the wasp positivity, I do need to temper the story slightly.

The yellow-legged (Asian) hornet (Vespa velutina) is a very real concern. It is an invasive species. It can outcompete native predators and causes particular concern for beekeepers.

Until very recently, Defra had done a good job keeping it under control in the UK.

So, let's be clear. Native wasps and invasive wasps are not the same conversation. When organisms are outside their native range and causing harm, they may need to be controlled.

But we should not let our concern about invasive species become a blanket hatred of all wasps.

My gateway wasps

I've been studying wasps for more than 25 years. I have travelled the world to find fun wasps, although I confess that until the pandemic forced me to stay at home, I did not study British wasps very much.

If you want to enter the wasp-positive world, Southeast Asian wasps are fabulous beginner wasps. They led me on to larger, scarier and more spectacular wasps around the world.

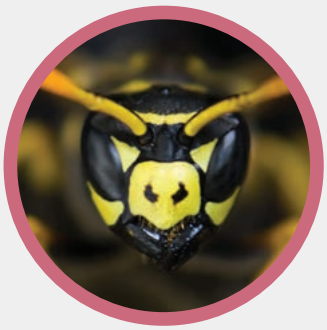
But I've realised something in recent years. Most people do not necessarily care about the social behaviour of wasps. What they really care about is what wasps do for them. So, here are four reasons to care.

♥ Wasps are pollinators

Adult social wasps hunt prey, but they do not eat the meat themselves. The prey goes to the larvae in the nest. The adults are, essentially, vegetarian. They need sugar, and they get it from flowers, ivy, fruit and, yes, sometimes your drink at a barbecue.

When wasps visit flowers, they can pick up pollen and move it from one flower to another. That makes them pollinators.

This is massively understudied compared with bees, but the evidence is there. We know that yellowjackets and hornets visit a huge diversity of plants. We know that common wasps visit ivy, which is an important autumn food source for other pollinators. If you care about bees having enough nectar and pollen, you should also care about the pollination of ivy.



Vespula_vulgaris19

15 Posts | 231 Followers | 173 Following

Wasp | Pollinator | Social

Worker

- Nest proud
- All for the queen
- Correcting the buzz about wasps.

Wasps may not look as fluffy as bees, but they are hairier than people realise. They also carry electrostatic charge, which can help pollen stick to them. They have many of the traits we associate with pollinators. We just haven't given wasp pollination the scientific attention it deserves.

♥ Wasps are food and medicine

Hands up, who has eaten a wasp? Usually, not many hands go up in Britain. You are missing out.

In parts of Japan, giant Asian hornet larvae and pupae are a delicacy. I spent time with hornet hunters there. They lure a worker in with bait, tie a ribbon to her, then follow her as she flies back to the colony. Over a few hours, they track the nest, dig it up and relocate it into a hive.

Then they rear the colony before harvesting the brood for human consumption. One wasp keeper proudly showed me his wasp larvae for sale in the local supermarket.

Japan even has an annual wasp festival. Wasp keepers bring along their best wasp nests in the same way we might bring prize cucumbers to a garden show. The biggest nest wins.

In Nagaland, in north-east India, wasps are not just a delicacy. They are part of life. People farm giant Asian hornets because they are part of their culture and food security. They know the ecology of these insects in astonishing detail. They know where queens are likely to be. They know how to move colonies. They know which species tastes best.

There are also medicinal dimensions. Wasp venom, symbionts and compounds associated with wasps are being studied for antibiotics, antivirals and even cancer treatments.

In the West, we are mostly unaware of this. In other parts of the world, people have a very different relationship with wasps; and we have a lot to learn from them.

♥ Wasps are culturally important

In Cameroon, we have been working with subsistence farmers to understand what they know about wasps and whether wasps might help them control crop pests.

There, we found social wasps living on houses and even inside houses. I remember standing in somebody's lounge, wearing Marigolds and a bee hat, taking down a nest so we could sequence the wasps.

The people in the house said, "You can have those two nests, but leave that one for me."

Over the sofa. Over the bed. They wanted to keep it. Why? Because to them, wasps are guardians of the house. They protect against evil spirits. They sting you if you "have a bad mind". They protect against disease. They "cure stomach aches".

Whether you share those beliefs or not, the point is that in some cultures, wasps are not automatically seen as enemies. The relationships of people who live very different lives to us, remind us how disconnected from nature we have become. I think we're missing a trick.

♥ Wasps are nature's pest controllers

If there is one thing I want you to remember, it is this: wasps regulate other insect populations. Take wasps away, and other insect populations can explode. Flies, beetles, caterpillars and other arthropods all become more abundant when you remove the top 'apex' predators.

Solitary wasps do this in wonderfully gruesome ways. One of my favourites is the jewel wasp. She stings a cockroach twice. The first sting slows it down, enabling her to administer the second sting, which she uses to inject neurotoxins into the zombie-cockroach's brain. The cockroach is still alive, but has no free will. She then walks it to her burrow, lays an egg on it, seals up the burrow and leaves her larva to eat its way through a perfectly preserved, paralysed living larder.

Vespula_vulgaris19

Vespula_vulgaris19 Thousands of insects eaten daily… you're welcome #NotTheBadGuys

And then there's Pepsis, a huge spider-hunting wasp we caught in the Amazon rainforest. She had just caught an enormous spider, which she had paralysed with venom. Had we not caught her for research, she would have buried that spider, laid an egg on it, and her baby would have feasted on its paralysed body.

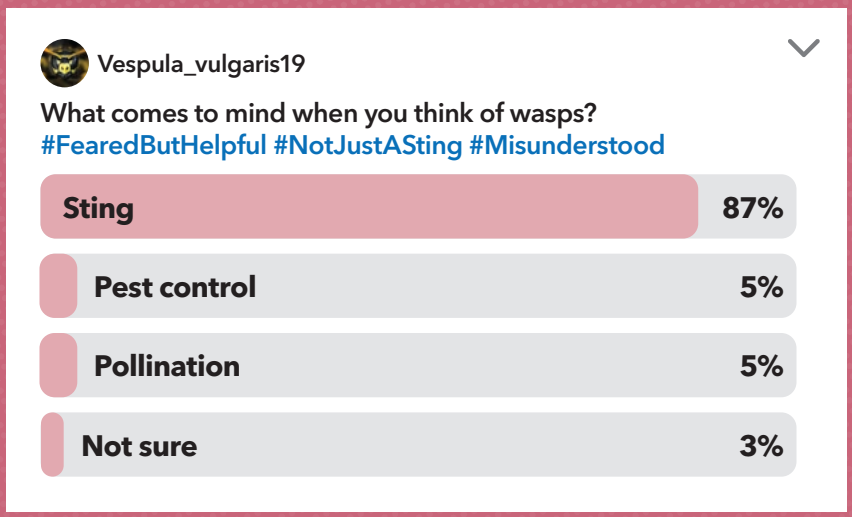
Social wasps are different. They are generalist predators, meaning they hunt a diversity of prey. A colony of yellowjackets may have thousands of workers hunting around the landscape. They take flies, caterpillars, beetles, spiders and many other arthropods.

We have studied the guts of common wasp larvae from colonies in southern England. The gut contains the remains of what it has been fed. By sequencing the DNA in those guts, we can see what the colony has been hunting.

"People tolerate bee stings because they understand what bees do. They know bees matter. They have a story for bees."

The answer is: a huge diversity of insects. That is why wasps have real potential as biocontrol agents. In Brazil, our work on social wasps has shown that they hunt major crop pests, including fall armyworm and sugarcane borer. They do not remove every pest, but they reduce pest numbers, reduce damage and help keep populations manageable.

In other words, wasps are pest controllers – like you. Just with wings.



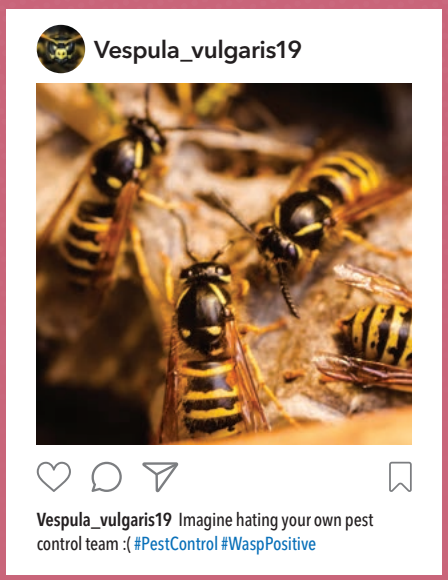
Where do [human] pest controllers fit in?

What is the pest controller's role in a wasp-positive future? I think there are three opportunities.

The first is relocation. I know that sounds radical, but it is not crazy. People relocate wasp nests in Asia every day – take the examples above from Japan and India. There are a few wasp conservationists in Europe doing it, but most relevantly, pest controllers in the United States are doing it.

Wasps use visual landmarks to find their nests, so if you move a nest only a short distance, the workers may return to the original site. But if you move it a few kilometres away, they reorientate to the new location. You may lose some workers, but if the colony is big enough, it should survive.

Yes, nests are fragile. But wasps rebuild. If the comb structure is damaged, we can separate sections, and they will repaper the envelope. They are remarkably resilient animals. As for aggression, your SodaStream is your friend.



Carbon dioxide can knock wasps down or make them dopey enough to handle. We use it in our research collections. A few pest controllers I know have tried it out, and the reports are encouraging. It is a means by which you can safely relocate a wasp nest, without using chemicals and minimising the risk of stings to you and those around you.

The second opportunity is communication. Pest controllers have access to people that scientists often do not. You go into homes and businesses when people are dealing with the animal. You are trusted to explain risk, options and action. That gives you power.

You can say, "This nest is in a risky place and needs managing." But you can also say, "This one is not causing a problem. It will die out naturally in the autumn; and meanwhile it is your nature-friendly pest controller, eating flies and caterpillars in your garden." That conversation can change how people think.

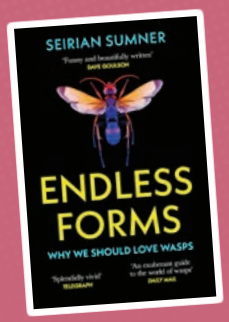
The third opportunity is collaboration. Scientists need live wasp nests. We are setting up "smart" wasp nests at UCL East to study sound, vibration, visual signals and communication. We need nests for our experiments, gene expression studies and work on parasites that may help control invasive yellowjackets in New Zealand. You get the calls. We need the nests.

A more useful future for wasps

I am not asking pest controllers to stop managing wasps. That would be unrealistic and, in some cases, unsafe. I am asking whether we can think a little differently.

Could some nests be left alone? Could some be relocated? Could pest controllers become communicators, explaining that wasps are not just stings with wings? Could you become collaborators, helping scientists understand these animals better? That is where your expertise matters.

A wasp-positive future does not mean ignoring risk. It means recognising value, making informed decisions and helping the public move beyond one word: sting.



If you are interested in collaborating with our wasp lab at UCL or come across a wasp nest that you think can be easily relocated without the use of chemicals (or used for our research), please email Seirian at **s.sumner@ucl.ac.uk**. Read more about the secret world of wasps in Seirian's popular science book, Endless Forms: Why You Should Love Wasps (William Collins).

DEBATE: BEE-FUDDLED–BEE MANAGEMENT AND PEST CONTROL

Niall Gallagher
NG BPCA Technical Manager (host)

Clive Stewart CS
Westart Apiaries, co-founder UK Bee Removers (UKBR)

Diane Drinkwater DD
British Beekeepers Association (BBKA)

Sam Thorpe ST
Predator Pest Solutions

Balancing public health and pollinator protection

NG How do we square public safety with saving bees?

CS Education first. Most callers simply don't understand what they're seeing. Calm the situation, explain the insect's behaviour and nine times out of ten, the panic subsides and we can discuss options rationally.

DD Our BBKA swarm-line operators have the same problem: every flying insect is "a bee or a wasp". Reassurance – not insecticide – is usually the answer.

ST Being able to say, "Actually, these pollinators can stay" demonstrates professional green credentials and builds long-term trust. Turning down an unnecessary treatment today often wins a bigger maintenance contract tomorrow.

Swarm calls, triage and public education

DD The secret is a robust triage script. First: honey, bumble or solitary? Second: is the swarm accessible? Third: does it genuinely need moving? We remind householders that most nests finish naturally by September.

ST A reliable ID network is gold dust. If I'm unsure, I ping a photo to Diane or Clive rather than guess. The public's confused; we can't be.

CS One leisure complex had a hive three storeys up. We put up an information board and left the bees. Diners loved it – free wildlife show, zero risk, zero chemicals.

Bee colonies in buildings – listed headaches

NG Listed façades add a layer of red tape. Tips?

DD Phone a conservation specialist before you lift a finger. We steer BBKA members away from structural jobs entirely – the insurance won't cover cutting into fabric.

CS Communication is key – engage conservation officers early, record the safety rationale, and get it in writing. Public health can outweigh listed status, but you must show it.

ST Know your limits. We're CHAS-accredited and still bring in scaffolders or another BPCA firm for Grade II* jobs. One mistake can bankrupt a business.

Training, insurance and the quarantine question

NG What's the first step for a technician who wants to offer swarm work?

DD Join your local beekeeping association and shadow an experienced collector. Always wait until dusk before lifting the box – or you'll get a 'second swarm' call the next day.

CS Pest controllers must check their own PI/PL policies. Standard cover often excludes livestock removal. BBKA insurance is public liability for volunteer beekeepers – it's void the moment you charge.

ST We pair every new bee tech with a mentor and insist on Cat B asbestos awareness.

DD And quarantine. Every swarm – cut-out or free-flying – goes into an isolation apiary for disease checks. With tropilaelaps edging west, we can't take risks.

Hidden hazards: asbestos, heights and honey seepage

ST Every invasive job starts with a structural survey. Bee flights can reach 10m and cross several ceilings. If there's any asbestos risk, we stop and test – a delay is better than exposure.

CS Cat B training is the minimum. If you aren't certified, step back and use someone who is. At height, hire a cherry picker, not a bigger ladder.

NG And remember the aftermath: kill a mature colony with insecticide and you inherit fermented honey, wax moth, carpet damage and the world's stickiest insurance claim.

Can every feral colony be moved – and should it?

DD If it's simply clustering on a branch, yes – textbook swarm collection. Inside masonry is different: beekeepers shouldn't touch fabric, and BBKA cover forbids power tools.

CS The question is cost-benefit. Sometimes fencing off and educating is kinder to bees and wallets.

ST We refuse chemical knock-downs. They rarely work, violate the spirit of pollinator stewardship and usually result in a second call-out when the entrance powder fails.

NG As a sector we need to normalise that stance: no to pesticides, yes to professional removal or toleration.

Costs, complaints and customer persuasion

ST Some clients flinch at a four-figure quote. I frame it as an investment – relocate the colony, gain positive PR, and avoid honey damage. Most boards sign off once they see that.

CS There are ways to trim the bill – client arranges scaffold, builder opens and reseals voids – but never undersell the bee work itself. It's a specialist trade.

DD Also sell the risk: untreated colonies can throw cast swarms all summer, spreading European foulbrood or varroa bombs across the postcode.

Final take-aways

DD Forge relationships. If you won't keep the bees yourself, line up a trustworthy beekeeper with a quarantine apiary before the season starts.

ST Build a framework – BBKA for entomology, UKBR for removal methods, BPCA for safety and legislation. Add a mentor and you'll learn twice as fast.

CS Education! The more you can explain – species, disease, legislation – the less resistance you'll meet.

NG And if you're serious about driving standards, join BPCA's Bee Wise special-interest group. **bpca.org.uk/committees-and-groups**

LOW- AND NO-CHEMICAL MANAGEMENT OF WASPS

Destroying a nest with insecticide will often be the right option, but should it always be the automatic first step? Proofing, good housekeeping, landscape management, monitoring, light traps and even manual nest removal can all reduce reliance on pesticides. This guidance sets out practical methods for UK pest professionals, drawing on international best practice where relevant.

With increasing restrictions on the professional pest management toolkit, BPCA Technical and Compliance Manager, Niall Gallagher, looks at effective wasp control and ideas that protect people, animals and ecosystems.

Speed read

- Seal gaps and proof buildings – queens can exploit spaces as small as 3 mm
- Keep bins clean, lids shut, and recyclables rinsed to cut food sources
- Manage planting and aphids around entrances to reduce attraction
- Use traps to monitor pressure: protein lures in spring, sugary baits in summer
- Only use HSE-approved insecticides when necessary – consider non-chemical first.

Exclusion and housekeeping

Proofing and physical barriers

The most sustainable way to manage wasps is to keep them out in the first place. Even very small gaps are enough for queens to find their way into a structure. As a guide, anything over 3 mm should be sealed. This means paying attention to common ingress points such as cable entry holes, vents, roof spaces and pipework. Durable, weather-resistant sealants and fillers are essential.

In some settings, particularly food production, healthcare or education, insect mesh is highly effective. A mesh aperture of less than 2 mm is recommended for windows, vents and doors. Screens should be removable for cleaning and comply with hygiene standards.

On sites with high footfall, such as shops or hospitals, pest professionals can also consider air curtains or automatic closers. These reduce the number of opportunities for wasps to enter when doors are propped open.

Housekeeping standards

Good housekeeping is as important as proofing. Waste is one of the strongest drivers for wasp activity, so bins must be emptied regularly, lids should be kept closed, and containers washed down to remove residues. During the height of summer, this may need to be done daily. Composting, if it takes place on site, should be confined to sealed systems.

Recycling must also be managed carefully. Bottles, cans and food packaging should always be rinsed before being placed outside. Sticky residues, even in small quantities, will attract large numbers of wasps.

Food businesses such as bakeries, kitchens and cafés should adopt strict internal cleaning schedules. Trays and racks must be cleared of residue before being taken outside, and sweet goods should not be stored outdoors. These relatively simple measures reduce wasp foraging activity and limit the likelihood of nests being established nearby.

Landscape management

It is not only the inside of a building that matters. Planting choices can have a big impact on wasp activity around entrances and outdoor seating. Avoid flowering shrubs or fruit trees directly outside high-traffic areas. Low-maintenance shrubs beneath windows can support pollinators while reducing accidental ingress.

Aphid management is also vital. Honeydew produced by aphids is a major attractant for wasps. Encouraging natural predators or washing down plants reduces honeydew build-up and the wasp activity that follows.

Wasp monitoring as part of an Integrated Pest Management Plan

Monitoring is the backbone of an integrated approach. Using traps helps to confirm activity levels and informs when and where interventions are required.

The type of lure used in traps should reflect the season. In spring, when queens are establishing nests, protein-based lures such as fish or meat are more effective. Later in the summer, colonies switch to carbohydrate needs, and sugary baits such as syrup or overripe fruit will perform better.

Season	Preferred lure type	Reasoning
Early spring	Protein-based lures (eg meat, fish)	Queens and young colonies require protein to raise larvae
Mid to late summer	Carbohydrate-based lures (eg syrup, fruit, sugary liquids)	Mature colonies shift to adult forager carbohydrate needs

Traps should be positioned where pressure is greatest, such as near waste compounds or outdoor seating, but never at entrances where activity might be drawn towards people. Deploying traps in early spring will catch overwintering queens, while increasing coverage mid-to-late summer helps track colony growth.

Recording trap catches by date, location and catch volume provides evidence to guide interventions. Over time, this data builds a picture of site-specific pressure and helps pest professionals evaluate control measures.

Physical controls

Insect light traps (ILTs)

ILTs can play a role in wasp management as part of a wider programme. Electric or kill-grid ILTs are best placed in low-risk areas, away from food preparation. Where traps are used outside or in damp environments, ensure they are IP66-rated. Social wasps can sometimes escape glueboard ILTs, so grid spacing and catch trays should be considered.

Manual or mechanical nest removal

In some situations, the lowest-chemical solution is to physically remove the nest. This can be particularly useful in sensitive locations such as organic food production sites or near watercourses.

The advantages are clear: removal can immediately reduce risk, it is especially effective at the early stages of colony development, and it prevents abandoned nests from becoming harbourage for other insects. The drawbacks are also significant: the risk of stings is high, nests may be difficult to access, and returning foragers may still need to be managed after removal.

Removing nests requires appropriate tools, PPE and training. Industrial vacuums with filters, water sprays to suppress activity, digging tools for ground nests and secure containers are standard equipment. Freeze spray may assist in safer removal. PPE must include a full-body bee suit rated for wasp stings, protective footwear, gloves that provide sting resistance without compromising dexterity, and access to first aid.

Timing matters. Removal is safest early in the morning or late in the evening when activity is lowest. The nest's size, location and proximity to the public must all be assessed as part of a thorough risk assessment.

"Good housekeeping is as important as proofing. Waste is one of the strongest drivers for wasp activity."

Regulatory context and best practice

In the UK, only pesticide products approved by the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) may be used when chemical intervention is required. Professional users must demonstrate competence, usually through recognised qualifications such as RSPH certifications.

Pest professionals are also encouraged to provide clients with information leaflets. Explaining the biology of wasps and the environmental importance of low-chemical strategies can help clients understand why prevention, monitoring and physical controls are prioritised.

Pros and cons of manual wasp nest removal

Pros	Cons
Rapid reduction of the local wasp population and immediate threat removal	High sting risk – requires specialist PPE and training
Effective at early stages of colony development	Returning foragers may persist after nest is removed
No pesticide use, making it suitable for sensitive sites (eg organic food production, near watercourses)	Nests can be difficult to access safely, especially at height or in confined spaces
Eliminates abandoned nests, preventing them becoming harbourage for other insects	Eliminates abandoned nests, preventing them becoming harbourage for other insects
Can be combined with monitoring or trapping to increase effectiveness.	Operations can be time-consuming and costly compared with chemical methods.

HAVE YOU TRIED LOW- OR NO-CHEMICAL WASP MANAGEMENT?

Got experience of relocating nests or had clients demand it as a treatment option? Let us know how wasp management is changing across the UK today, and we might just print your response in the next PPC!
hello@bpca.org.uk

GUIDANCE

BEE DISEASE AWARENESS AND BIOSECURITY

An online CPD quiz based on this feature is now available on the BPCA website. BPCA Registered members and anyone with a MyBPCA account can take a CPD quiz at any time **bpca.org.uk/find-cpd** or sign up at **bpca.org.uk/me**

Speed read

- Always assume disease risk and check BeeBase before starting work, and record findings in your risk assessment
- Be competent in identifying EFB and AFB and keep training up to date
- Maintain strict biosecurity with PPE, cleaning and clear records at every job
- If disease is suspected, stop work, restrict movement and contact the Bee Inspector
- Use quarantine apiaries properly, with full traceability and at least two brood cycles before reintroduction.

Bee disease is one of those risks that can quietly sit in the background of a job until it suddenly becomes very real. For pest professionals involved in bee removals, understanding disease risk, spotting the signs and knowing what to do next is essential.

This guidance sets out a practical approach to managing bee disease risk before, during and after removal work. It focuses on awareness, biosecurity and clear procedures so you can work confidently while protecting both honeybee populations and your own reputation. We all have a legal responsibility to report suspicions of notifiable disease, as per The Bee Diseases and Pests Control (England) Order 2006.

Understanding disease risk

Before any work starts, you should assume that disease could be present. The absence of records does not mean the absence of disease.

A good starting point is to check BeeBase for known disease incidents in the local area. This helps build a picture of risk and should be part of your standard survey process.

You should:

- Review BeeBase data for current and previous years
- Note any history of European foulbrood (EFB) or American foulbrood (AFB)
- Record findings within your environmental risk assessment or survey.
- This information helps shape your approach on-site. It also demonstrates due diligence if your decisions are ever questioned.

Competency and training

Recognising bee disease is not optional. If you are removing bees, you are expected to have a working knowledge of the main diseases, particularly EFB and AFB.

Competency can be built through:

- Local Beekeeper Association training
- Healthy Bees workshops
- UK Bee Removers (UKBR) Bee Disease Day
- National Bee Unit (NBU) training and resources.

Training should not be a one-off exercise. Refresher learning is important, especially as disease patterns and guidance evolve. Keep records of your training as part of your CPD.

Having the right contacts

If you suspect disease, you need to act quickly. That means having the right contact details to hand.

You should always have:

- A contact number for your Regional Bee Inspector
- Access to Seasonal Bee Inspector contacts if needed.

Do not rely on searching for these details in the moment. Keep them saved and easily accessible.

Managing expectations with clients

Bee removals are not just technical jobs. They involve managing customer expectations, especially where disease risk is involved.

Your risk assessment should include the possibility of disease. However, you should also make it clear that:

- A lack of recorded disease does not guarantee a clean colony
- Additional steps may be required if disease is suspected or confirmed
- Removal may be more complex than initially expected.

Building disease awareness into your conversations helps avoid disputes later and reinforces your professionalism.

Identifying disease on site

European Foulbrood

Brood showing symptoms of European Foulbrood (Melissococcus plutonius) infection (EFB), with larvae at various stages of decay.

American Foulbrood

American Foulbrood (Paenibacillus larvae) infected larval remains of forming a drawn out, viscous string during a matchstick rope test.

Biosecurity in practice

Biosecurity is where good intentions either hold up or fall apart. Poor hygiene between jobs can spread disease and undermine your work.

PPE and equipment

Where possible:

- Use disposable PPE such as nitrile gauntlets
- Avoid porous materials like leather where contamination is harder to manage
- Use separate suits for apiary work and removals.

If separate PPE is not practical, then thorough cleaning between jobs is essential.

Contaminated items should be double-bagged before washing.

Non-reusable materials should be disposed of appropriately, with incineration considered where necessary and legal.

Cleaning procedures

You should have a cleaning solution available on site.

A commonly used mix for tools is:

- 150ml bleach (containing sodium hypochlorite at 4.5g per 100g)
- 4.5 litres of water
- 1kg washing soda.

For boot disinfection:

- 150ml bleach
- 4.5 litres of water.

Always ensure compliance with COSHH requirements and use suitable alternatives where guidance changes.

What to do if disease is suspected

If you encounter signs of disease during a removal, you need to switch from routine working to an emergency procedure.

1 STOP WORK

Stop work where appropriate. Restrict movement of bees, equipment and materials. Isolate the affected area.

2 NOTIFY

Contact your Regional or Seasonal Bee Inspector as soon as possible. Follow their guidance carefully.

3 TESTING AND ASSESMENT

Where test kits are available, they may be used, but inspector guidance should always take priority.

4 QUARANTINE APIARY MANAGEMENT

Where bees are removed and retained, quarantine procedures are critical.

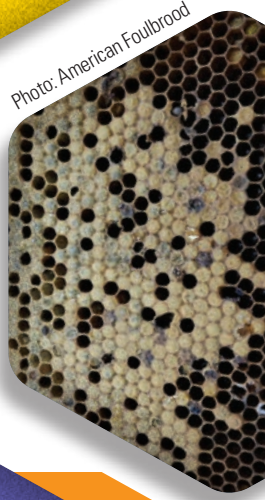


Photo: American Foulbrood

5 LOGGING AND TRACEABILITY

All movements should be logged on BeeBase. Colonies must be uniquely identifiable.

6 BIOSECURITY LEVELS

Adopt a tiered approach to biosecurity based on risk.

Record keeping

Biosecurity measures should not just be done; they should be recorded.

Document:

- Cleaning procedures used
- PPE management
- Any contamination risks identified.

This protects you and provides a clear audit trail.

Dealing with queen issues

If a colony loses or damages its queen, any intervention, such as combining colonies, should follow good bee husbandry principles. Avoid introducing unnecessary risk during quarantine.

Final thoughts

Bee disease management is about building awareness into everything you do.

In practice, that means:

- Review local disease data pre-site
- Being confident in identifying key diseases
- Maintaining strong biosecurity between jobs
- Acting quickly and appropriately if disease is suspected
- Keeping clear records throughout.

Working with bees carries a responsibility that goes beyond the immediate job. Disease can spread quickly and have serious consequences for beekeepers and the wider environment.

By taking a structured, professional approach to disease awareness and biosecurity, you not only protect the bees but also safeguard your business and the industry's reputation as a whole.

Once you've finished reading this guidance, you can take the Bee disease awareness and biosecurity CPD quiz (login required).

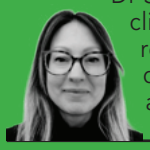
BPCA makes strenuous efforts to ensure the accuracy and current relevance of its publications, which are intended for use by technically competent persons.

However, this does not remove the need for technical and managerial judgement in practical situations. Nor do they confer any immunity or exemption from relevant legal requirements, including by-laws.

If you suspect something in this document is incorrect or out of date, please report it to **technical@bpca.org.uk** so we can review it.

Created in collaboration with the National Bee Unit and UK Bee Removers (UKBR).

Emerging global pest threats and the secrets of SCENT SCIENCE



Dr Sophie Wulff of Arctech Innovation explores how climate change, resistance and invasive species are reshaping pest control, and why scent science and data-driven detection will be critical to staying ahead of the next wave of pest threats.

You smell. Every single one of us does. Some more than others. That might sound flippant, but smell has a bad reputation for a reason. It's tied to disgust, decay and danger. That reaction is a survival mechanism. If something smells wrong, we instinctively avoid it because, historically, that kept us alive.

But smell also has a positive side. It's a hidden language that humans and animals use constantly, often without realising it. There's a famous experiment where men were asked to wear the same t-shirt for several nights, after which women were asked to smell them and choose the most appealing scent. The women consistently preferred the scent of men who were genetically most different from them. Smell, it turns out, plays a quiet but powerful role in behaviour.

Where I work, we're unlocking that hidden language. And it matters, because the future of pest detection is data-driven. Some of the most effective tools we need have been right under our noses all along.

Pest volatility is the real challenge

Before getting into scent science, it's important to address what I see as one of the biggest challenges facing pest management right now. Pest volatility.

We're seeing increasing changes in pest patterns, and those changes are accelerating. Climate change, global travel and insecticide resistance are all driving forces behind it.

Take the Asian tiger mosquito. It can transmit diseases such as dengue and yellow fever and has already been detected breeding in parts of Kent and the South East. At the moment, UK winters are still cold enough to prevent it overwintering, so it's classed as detected but not established. But it is now established in France, having moved north from the Mediterranean.

What makes it particularly risky is egg survival. The eggs can survive desiccation. They can be laid on something like a tyre in southern Europe, transported to the UK, and with just a small amount of rainfall, hatch into breeding adults.

Rodents are another example. We've lost winter kill. Harsh winters used to reduce rat populations, but that's no longer reliable. Since the 1980s and 1990s, rats have increasingly bred right through December and January, leading to spring population surges in cities like London and Manchester.

Then there's resistance. Bed bugs have developed genetic knockdown resistance, thicker cuticles and behavioural adaptations that reduce the effectiveness of some sprays. German cockroaches have evolved glucose avoidance, rendering certain baits ineffective. Global travel spreads these resistant populations quickly, particularly through transport hubs.

Invasive species are also pushing further into the UK. Asian hornets threaten honeybees. Oak processionary moths are now common in London parks and are moving north. Tropical ants such as pharaoh ants and ghost ants are thriving in heated urban environments.

And with warmer temperatures come shorter breeding cycles. Insects are cold-blooded, so their metabolism and reproduction speed increase with heat. A two-degree rise can mean one to five extra generations per season. House flies are a good example. At extreme temperatures, eggs that normally hatch in 20 hours can hatch in eight, and larvae can become adults in four days. This is what unpredictability looks like in real terms.

Why detection matters more than ever

So how do we take control of that unpredictability? The answer, whether we like it or not, is data-driven pest control. I can't pretend to know how to run a profitable pest control business. That's your expertise. But all roads right now are leading towards better data.

Knowing what species you have, exactly where it is, when it arrived and how many there are changes everything. Sometimes one pest is too many. Sometimes it's population dynamics that matter. Accurate detection puts you in a position to respond efficiently and proportionately.

The industry is moving from reactive to predictive. Traditionally, you visit a site, find the infestation and deal with it. That's time-consuming and often means you're chasing a problem that's already established.

New detection methods, including AI-powered sensors, monitor sites 24/7. They don't just tell you there's a pest. They tell you when it arrived. Catching a single scout rat or one bed bug before it breeds can prevent major clean-out jobs and repeated visits.

We're also seeing a shift towards digital proof of absence. Companies are starting to charge for the absence of pests, not just for killing them. That's a big change in business models. Detection supports non-toxic monitoring, keeps high-value contracts active and provides audit readiness and compliance assurance.

Accurate detection also allows targeted treatment. Instead of blanket control, technicians can act precisely. You become a sniper rather than a carpet bomber. That has obvious implications for chemical resistance and integrated pest management.

> **"Insects don't explore with smell, they react to it. That precision is what makes scent so powerful."**

Smell as an underestimated science

This is where scent science comes in.

Smell has always been used in detection. Dogs are an obvious example. A dog's olfactory brain is around 40 times larger than ours. I was involved in a UK study at the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine looking at canine detection of Covid. We collected odour samples from around 4,000 participants and identified a very specific scent associated with infection, even in asymptomatic cases. But insects are even better sniffers than dogs, just in a different way.

Dogs are high-definition scanners. They build complex scent pictures and have strong scent memory. Insects are more like laser-focused sensors. Their receptors are fewer but far more specialised. A male silkworm moth can detect a single molecule of a female's pheromone and respond instantly by flying upwind.

Insects don't explore with smell. They react to it. Their olfactory system is a set of "if-then" triggers. If pheromone, then mate. If CO_2, then bite. If glucose, then eat. That precision is what makes scent so powerful.

Learning from insect chemistry

Chemicals are the language insects use. Pheromones communicate within a species. Kairomones benefit the receiver, like mosquitoes detecting human CO_2. Allomones benefit the sender, such as defensive odours. Synomones benefit both, such as plants attracting parasitic wasps to kill caterpillars.

These chemical signals are already used in pest management, particularly as attractants. One example my team has worked on extensively is bed bug aggregation pheromones.

Research has shown that bed bug faeces contain aggregation pheromones that attract other bed bugs to refuge sites. In laboratory studies, bed bugs cluster strongly around these odours. When hungry, they follow CO_2 and human odours. When looking to hide, they follow aggregation pheromones.

By identifying the specific chemical components and releasing them in the correct ratios, we can replicate that signal. The result is an attractant that works with the human host rather than competing with it. These traps are particularly effective for low-level infestations and for pre- and post-treatment verification.

Replicating the insect brain with AI

Odours are complex mixtures. Traditional gas sensors can detect single chemicals like CO_2, but odours are more like fingerprints or musical scores. What's been missing is the ability to interpret those complex signals. That's where AI comes in.

We're using machine learning to replicate neural networks found in insect brains. Sensor arrays collect volatile organic compound data, which is transmitted to the cloud and decoded by algorithms trained to recognise specific pest odour patterns.

Each device generates rich data: where, when, what and how many. Combined over time with historical and meteorological data, this allows us to predict and prevent outbreaks rather than simply react to them.

Remote monitoring has had its ups and downs, but it's improving rapidly. Whether through motion, cameras or scent detection, it's becoming an essential tool for managing unpredictability.

Where this leaves the industry

We're not quite at fully predictive, climate-adaptive heat mapping yet. But that's where the industry is heading.

Pest volatility isn't going away. Detection is becoming as valuable as treatment. Data is becoming a commercial asset. And scent science, long underestimated, may be one of the most powerful tools we have to stay ahead.

The future of pest control is about making the unknown known. And sometimes, the answer really has been right under our nose all along.

WHAT'S COMING NEXT FOR PEST DETECTION?

Scent-enabled AI detection
At Arctech Innovation, work is underway on scent-based detection systems that use AI to interpret complex pest odour profiles. Rather than simply flagging activity, these tools aim to identify the species present, pinpoint when it arrived and, over time, provide deeper biological insight such as sex or reproductive status.

24/7 remote monitoring sensors
Sophie also highlights the growing role of continuous monitoring using motion sensors, cameras and environmental detection. The value lies in knowing exactly when a pest appears, enabling earlier intervention and avoiding established infestations.

Digital proof of absence
Detection technology is enabling a shift in how pest services are delivered and charged for. Monitoring systems are increasingly being used to demonstrate the absence of pests, supporting compliance, audit readiness and long-term contracts rather than reactive call-outs.

Advanced attractant-based traps
Building on scent science, more chemically precise pheromone and odour-based traps are being developed, particularly for pests like bed bugs. These tools are designed for early detection, verification and low-level infestations, working alongside treatments rather than replacing them.

Climate-adaptive heat mapping
Sophie also points to AI systems being developed to combine detection data with environmental and meteorological information. While still emerging, this approach could allow pest professionals to anticipate outbreaks and plan resources more effectively.

THE ARCHER ADJUSTMENT: A MOLE TRAPPING PROFESSIONAL'S SWANSONG

Dave Archer, DKA Training, has been catching moles professionally for almost five decades.

Working with scientists from Plymouth University and University of Exeter, Dave has helped develop a new type of mole trap. Here he shares his thoughts on humane capture, mole trap design and the Archer Adjustment.

I have been catching moles professionally for well over forty-five years and whilst we as an industry are increasingly concerned about animal welfare in general, it seems that moles in particular have never been afforded such privilege.

From post-war times, the cast iron scissor trap was the most widely available trap, and as designs changed, so did the efficacy of the trap. Modern versions are made using galvanised or stainless steel, and the Fenn mole trap takes the design one stage further and is far removed from the original design.

In the last fifty or so years, many different design of traps have entered the market – which goes to show the ingenuity of inventors, and perhaps the perceived difficulty in the art of trapping moles!

However, if you become proficient in mole trapping, the techniques used in deploying the traps are essentially similar; ergo if you can catch with one design, you can probably catch with most mole trap designs.

Welfare considerations

But being able to catch a mole is only part of the overall picture. We must also be as humane in our trapping campaigns as possible. Legislation in mole trapping has largely gone over the moles head, which I find incredible for this day and age.

Mole traps are not included in the Spring Traps Approval Order (STAO). There is no statutory timescale for checking of mole traps, only recommendations.

Even so-called 'humane catch alive' mole traps, available from many garden centres, may possibly be the cruellest traps available today. Once the mole enters the tube it often dies a lingering death in a plastic coffin. Ref. Baker and McDonald 2012.

The scissor and Putange style traps nearly always give a clean kill, despite what others have stated about their performance. I state "nearly," as no trap is ever one hundred percent effective.

Unlike many, I had huge reservations regarding the Duffus or half barrel trap –

Defra pledges to look at mole traps

Over Christmas, the Government launched its Animal Welfare Strategy, which included a commitment to review mole traps. Mole traps are completely unregulated in England and Wales under The Small Ground Vermin Traps Order 1958, and in Scotland under equivalent legislation.

They don't appear on the Spring Trap Approvals Order; they don't go through any approvals process.

So in March, we asked you for your views and experiences with mole trapping. The results confirmed real welfare concerns, with the market full of cheap imitations and knock-offs.

Professionals know what makes a good mole trap, and our Code of Best Practice reinforces that. But the public doesn't know what makes a good mole trap, and these poor-quality traps are available online and in garden centres around the country.

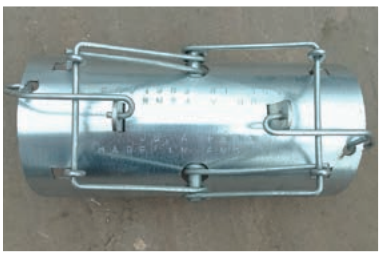
Even if a member of the general public was able to choose a good trap, they wouldn't have the experience necessary to use it effectively or humanely. The survey results showed just how specialised mole control was, with over a third having more than 20 years of experience, and three-quarters having more than 5 years.

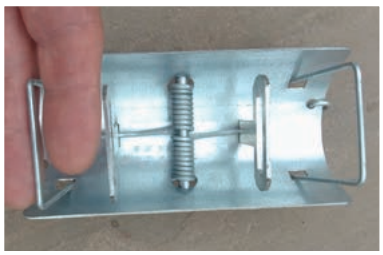
Your feedback also confirmed that there was no alternative to trapping: there are no chemical repellents, deterrents don't work, and aluminium phosphide is unpopular and cannot be used everywhere.

Based on your feedback, if the government decides to act following its review, BPCA could support adding mole traps to the Spring Trap Approval Orders for England and Wales. This would be conditional on manufacturers being actively supported through the approvals process, and there not being any point at which we have no approved traps.

We believe that such a change would ensure that the best traps already used by professionals remain available, while clamping down on the public's use of poor-quality traps.

Send your thoughts to **policy@bpca.org.uk**





"The Archer Adjustment" early prototypes.

and still do. Improvements in the manufacturing process, (using stainless steel half-barrels and springs), may have improved the mechanics of the operation, but the strike bar is still left in the original design's position.

My main objection to this is that the trap's catch bar often hits the mole in the midriff, and the mole dangles upside down to die a lingering death. Those that state the answer was to bend and manipulate the trap wires were, I felt, missing the point two-fold.

Firstly, if any trap has to be modified by the end user before being deployed, there is a fundamental design flaw.

Secondly, even bent and modified wires can be pushed back into the original position by a mole before the trap is sprung, making the adjustments ineffective, as the catch bar was still hitting the mole in the midriff as opposed to the vital organs.

Doing the research

Of course, there are many who would state that one man's opinions are perhaps unreliable and based on personal bias. I have no qualms with this; however, Oxford University's scientists were advertising far and wide in 2017 for any mole trappers to assist in a scientific research study into the efficiency of mole traps, in particular half-barrel and Putange style types.

I was delighted that scientific research could now perhaps validate my personal observations.

As far as I am aware, I was the only mole trapper to reply to their request, and after an initial meeting, I then sent numerous samples and photographs of trapped moles for the scientists to evaluate the individual traps performance.

The results concluded that half-barrel traps in particular have flaws compared to other designs.

Armed with this information, I contacted all of the major suppliers and manufacturers, to ascertain their willingness to change design. Sadly, not one company gave the idea any merit.

Not to be thwarted, I therefore adapted a Duffus trap myself and tested it in the field and not only did it work, but it killed cleanly every time because the mumble pin and catch bar were now closer together, and hitting in the vital organ area.

I then took my modified trap to D B Springs in Astwood Bank (the original A. Fenn works,) to consider the new design.

After many meetings, and based on the proven effectiveness of my adjustment, the owner then came back with a different modification that is not only easier to set, but in field trials it strikes in the vital organs without any trap adjustment.

I am now working with University of Exeter to further investigate mole traps from a scientific basis. This new design will be included in the research.

I called the invention the "Archer Adjustment"; it's my swansong to a lifetime's career, and if you care about mole welfare, I urge you to give this new design a go.

If not for your conscience, then certainly for the little gentleman in black velvet's welfare!

A research project is currently being undertaken into mole control by two scientists at the University of Exeter.

A three-year research project, led by Dr Sarah Crowley and Dr Jules Dezeure at the Penryn campus in Cornwall, seeks to better understand how European moles are perceived and managed in practice.

Dr Dezeure said, "While moles are widespread across the UK, little research exists on current approaches to management, how well these are working, and what alternatives could be viable.

"As part of the project, we are conducting interviews with land and wildlife management professionals, including pest controllers and farmers, to explore perceptions of moles, motivations for management, practical challenges, and views on various techniques. Your expertise and insights are invaluable to this work."

If you are interested in collaborating or sharing your experiences, or have any questions about the research, please contact Dr Dezeure at **j.l.f.dezeure@exeter.ac.uk**. Your participation will help inform future policy, guidance, and wildlife management practices.

Dave added, "If you are involved in practical mole control, this is your chance to actively contribute to the future of mole welfare: don't bury your head in the soil, get involved!"

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BORING BUT BRILLIANT

WOOD-BORING INSECTS

Nicholas Donnithorne FLS FRES, UK Technical Manager at Rentokil Property Care, has worked with wood-boring insects, fungi, damp and timber treatment since 1980. Nicholas talks through the basics pest professionals need to know about woodworm, frass, flight holes and the species that can easily be mistaken for timber pests.

I know wood-boring insects may not be the first thing most pest professionals deal with day to day. Usually, specialist property care technicians deal with them. But you will get asked about them. Someone will find holes in a floorboard, beetles on a windowsill, or a load of dusty material under a piece of timber, and they will want to know whether the building is being eaten. So, let's start with the basics.

Heartwood and sapwood

With wood-boring insects, you need to understand heartwood and sapwood.

Generally speaking, both insects and fungi are interested in the nice, delicious, nutritious sapwood. They're not interested in heartwood in the same way. Heartwood is full of rubbish from the tree, resins and that sort of thing.

It takes around 15 to 20 years to form heartwood in timber. So if you're felling trees at 20 or 25 years old, they will mostly be sapwood. That means they can be eaten by wood-boring insects and decayed by wood-rotting fungi. If you want a quick return on your forest investment, and you're growing timber for something like a child's bunkbed ladder, you don't need large-section timbers. So you grow it as fast as you can, using fast-grown trees such as Spruce, Radiata pine, or Paulownia.

You can see the proof of the pudding in attacked timber. You may find heartwood sitting in the centre, with decay and insect damage around the outside in the sapwood band. The insects haven't gone boring outside that sapwood band because that's where the nutrition is. If the timber has also become wet, all the better, as wood-boring beetle larvae get their water through the wood they eat.

Most modern houses are built out of conifers, known as softwoods. Older properties, especially timber-framed buildings, may have hardwoods such as oak. That matters because different insects prefer different timbers.

I keep breeding colonies of some wood-boring insects. One of my deathwatch beetle colonies was supported on fresh little oak sapwood blocks. The beetles moved out of the

An online CPD quiz based on this feature is now available on the BPCA website. BPCA Registered members and anyone with a MyBPCA account can take a CPD quiz at any time **bpca.org.uk/find-cpd** or sign up at **bpca.org.uk/me**

old, infested timber and into the fresh blocks because they knew perfectly well which bit was better food.

Where does woodworm come from?

The term woodworm refers to the larvae of any wood-boring beetle. When people ring up, they're usually talking about common furniture beetle, but there are several species we need to think about.

The common ones are:

Species	What to remember
Common furniture beetle (Anobium punctatum)	The commonest one you are likely to come across in UK properties.
Deathwatch beetle (Xestobium rufovillosum)	Usually associated with decayed hardwoods, especially oak. Adults tap to attract a mate.
House longhorn beetle (Hylotrupes bajulus)	Mainly found in north-west Surrey into Berkshire. Attacks softwood sapwood.
Powderpost beetle (Lyctus brunneus)	Attacks wide-pored hardwood sapwood with high starch content.
Wood-boring weevils (Pentarthrum huttoni, Euophryum confine and Euophryum rufum)	Need damp, decayed timber. Damage is secondary to fungal decay.

These insects are out there in the natural environment. They can fly or crawl into a property, but normally come into buildings through infested timber, furniture, packing cases and things like the old tea chests people used to put in their lofts after they moved.

If you're in a terrace and number one has a really good common furniture beetle attack in the loft, it can slowly progress along.

The life cycle

Common furniture beetle has a life cycle of around three to five years, all inside a piece of wood. There's nothing on the surface for us to get to easily.

Most of these beetles emerge somewhere between April and September. If you're finding lots of beetles outside that period, they're unlikely to be wood-borers.

The female lays eggs randomly, trying to push them into a crack or something similar. After about four weeks they hatch, and the little larva bores down through the egg case into the wood if it can.

Why does it eat the egg case? Because these beetles have somehow got to get nutrition out of wood fibre. They rasp off a bit of wood fibre, put it in their mouth, and it goes down their gut. The enzymes in the gut extract the nutrition. Those enzymes come from their mother and her mother before her. When she lays the eggs, she gets a bit of enzyme over the egg case. The larva eats the egg case and picks it up.

Then it wiggles around inside the timber, munching as it goes. You're not going to see it.

When it is ready to emerge, it forms a pupal chamber near the surface. The pupal chamber is clear inside to give space for the pupa to form. No frass, no poop. People think frass falls out of flight holes because it has come out of the pupal chamber. It is usually caused by beetles or larvae moving in the tunnels behind a flight hole

The adult pops out of the pupal case, munches away the last thin veneer of timber above its head and emerges. As most of the British wood-borers are concerned, that's the only time the adult munches wood. They're not taking it in for nutrients.

Then they run around, look for a mate, mate, lay eggs and drop dead. The only exception in the common species is wood-boring weevil, where both the larva and the adult eat decayed wood.

Moisture matters

Wood-boring larvae need water and nutrition from dry timber. That is not easy.

Laboratory research shows eggs won't hatch between 8% and 12% moisture content. Your average heated house is around 9%, so it's on the cusp. A normal cool house is around 15%.

But the beetles are not usually in the middle of a lovely, dry living room. They are under subfloors, in damp timbers, or where there has been a leak.

In one case I remember, there was nothing in the big beam, but the timber block built into the wall, which was getting damp, was completely riddled. Another was a leaking bath. A nice little drip, drip, drip every now and then, and the floorboard had completely disintegrated.

Frass is useful

Woodworm frass, for want of a better word, is their poop. It's perfectly safe to handle. Pick it up in your fingers, rub it between your thumb and forefinger, and have a look under a hand lens.

If it is gritty and lemon-shaped, you've got common furniture beetle frass.

All those wood fibres pass down the gut, are packaged at the rear end and pooped out. From the shape, you can tell what species is inside the wood. Some material is torn off but not eaten, and that is called rejectamenta. Most of it is excrementa. Different species produce different frass. House longhorn beetle produces nice, big sausage-shaped pellets. Powderpost beetle produces very fine, talc-like material.

If someone tells you they have larvae crawling on the surface of the wood, be careful. In your line of work, if you've got larvae crawling over a piece of wood, unless it's deathwatch beetle at the right time of year, I'd suggest having a better look, it is probably the larva of a stored product beetle, moth or fly.

Deathwatch beetle is the exception that proves the rule. When newly hatched, if it can't get down into a crevice in the oak, it may go wandering. It's covered in very fine hairs and can roll itself along the surface until it finds somewhere to go in, such as an old flight hole or crevice.

Common furniture beetle

Common furniture beetle is the one you are most likely to come across. It accounts for the bulk of woodworm problems in UK homes.

It's a dark chocolate-brown insect. The head is tucked under the pronotum.

It attacks softwoods and the sapwood of European hardwoods. It also likes plywood. Think about how plywood is made. You take a log, boil it or soak it, put it on a lathe, introduce a very sharp blade, and the ply comes off in a long thin sheet. You glue it together in layers and get plywood. That is a product you want to grow as fast as possible to get your money back, so it is mostly sapwood. Therefore, it is mostly food for wood-boring beetles.

Wickerwork is another one. Wicker baskets, particularly laundry baskets in bathrooms, are well worth looking at.

Common furniture beetle is often confused with biscuit beetle. Biscuit beetle is ruddy brown, whereas common furniture beetle is darker chocolate brown. Biscuit beetles are also often found outside the woodworm flight season and in large numbers.

So don't just see a small brown beetle and assume timber treatment.

Deathwatch beetle

Deathwatch beetle is a much bigger, hairier beetle. For those of you as old as me, it has lovely Des Lynam hair, little pale patches here and there.

You'll normally find these in hardwoods, especially oak, and usually where there has already been some decay. They prefer European hardwoods, especially oak, ash and chestnut softened by partial decay, and may rarely attack softwoods if in contact with

"They come into buildings through infested timber, furniture, packing cases and things like old tea chests."

All photography credit: Nicholas Donnithorne

infested hardwoods. The famous thing about deathwatch beetle is the tapping areas, often dark bits of timber up in lofts, and they need to communicate. Most insects use pheromones. Deathwatch beetles decided they wanted to get into handbanging as well, a bit like Status Quo but an awful lot faster.

They come up on the front, come up on the rear and head down on the frons. The impact rate can be around 10 beats per second, usually 13 beats in each burst.

If you've got a property with deathwatch beetle and you're in bed at night, it is quite noisy. Brilliant, unless your house is infested with it, in which case you just want it to go away.

Other beetles and the things that are not woodworm

House longhorn beetle is a large beetle, around 20mm, with long antennae. In the UK, it is mainly found from north-west Surrey into Berkshire. It attacks softwood sapwood and, these days, I most often see it in imported timber.

Forest longhorn beetles are different. There are thousands of longhorn beetle species worldwide, and more than 100 in the UK, so a photograph of "a longhorn" is not always enough. Often the source is firewood brought in for winter. If beetles emerge in spring, they may look dramatic, but they are not necessarily going to attack the property.

Powderpost beetle usually comes from hardwoods that have not been properly seasoned. It needs high-starch sapwood from wide-pored hardwoods and can turn over sapwood quickly. Most are coming into the UK in imported finished products.

Wood-boring weevils need damp, decayed timber. If they could eat dry, solid timber, they would probably be the commonest wood-borer in the UK. They can't. They need timber already affected by fungal decay.

Pest professionals will also get calls about insects that are not wood-borers at all. Ash bark beetle can emerge from ash logs. Hide beetle can make shallow pupation chambers in timber after feeding on dead material, such as a pigeon in a loft. Brown tree ants can turn up in damp areas, insulation boards and underfloor heating, causing people to worry about termites or carpenter ants.

Surveying

Surveying is mostly similar to what pest professionals already do; except this time you're looking at bits of wood.

Most woodworm are flying beetles, so they can be found anywhere there is wood. Look where beetles can gain access and where they may have been brought in.

Carpets and floor coverings inhibit flight, which is why boards should be lifted to check for activity. Be careful with timber or vinyl laminate because it can hide a heavy existing infestation.

Look at stored wood items in roof spaces, especially wicker baskets and logs by fireplaces. You should be asking:

- What species is it?
- What is the degree of infestation?
- Are the holes clean?
- Is there frass?
- Are there larvae?
- Are there dead or live beetles?
- Are there tapping sounds?
- Are there holes in underlays?
- Are there signs of previous treatment?

Use a probe or hammer to establish the soundness of the timber and whether treatment is needed. A floorboard might only show a few holes on the surface, but if you cut into it, you may find quite a lot of damage inside.

Treatment basics

These days, we are usually left with spraying the surface of timber using a water-based preservative containing permethrin or borates.

Borates can diffuse through damp timber where conditions allow, whereas many water-based preservatives do not penetrate very deeply. With those, you are often treating around the outside and waiting for the insect to emerge and ingest a toxic dose.

The spray method is not like pest control spraying. We are not using fan sprays, high pressure or trying to drift a fine film over a surface. We use a coarse-cone spray, preferably at low pressure, and coat the timber to near run-off.

For deathwatch beetle, supplementary treatments may include defrassing, exposing and treating timber, paste, injection to sapwood only, or timber replacement. For house longhorn, you may also need defrassing and timber strengthening.

Controlled atmosphere technology can be used on valuable items, such as antique furniture. Treatment takes around 30 days using carbon dioxide or nitrogen. We are asphyxiating the little devils.

For most pest professionals, the main point is not to become a timber specialist overnight. It is to know what you are looking at, know when it might not be woodworm, and know when to signpost to someone with the right training.

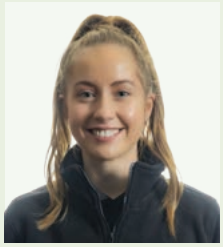
Because if you get the identification wrong, you can send the client down completely the wrong route.

Rentokil Property Care provides property preservation services to homes and businesses across the UK. They provide thorough damp and timber surveys and specialist treatments across the UK. **rentokil.co.uk/property-care**

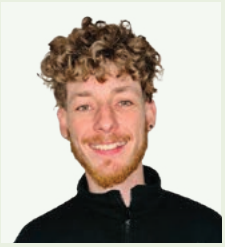
OPINION

IS UPSELLING REALLY THE KEY TO GROWTH FOR PEST COMPANIES?

Paul Cooper PC
London Network for Pest Solutions



Gemma Sutherland GS
Pest Solutions



Shane-Daniel North SDN
Eradikil Pest Control

Rob Curston RC
Contego

Upselling without selling

PPC Upselling can feel like a dirty word in pest control. There's a fear it means pushing unnecessary services or pressuring customers. Did any of you actually set out to upsell?

GS No, not really. We didn't sit down and decide to upsell. For us, pest awareness training came from wanting to deliver better customer service. We'd often see repeat issues where customers didn't fully understand why problems kept coming back. So we focused on education.

If you can recognise where a customer needs support and offer something genuinely helpful, that's just good service. If that also generates revenue, then that's a positive outcome rather than the main driver.

PC I'd agree with that. Upselling wasn't something we targeted. It evolved out of frustration, really. We were doing a lot of domestic work, housing association work and local authority contracts, and we kept seeing the same infestations returning.

Block control works, but it doesn't always fix individual properties. Proofing became the missing piece. We didn't choose it in a strategic sense. It chose us because it solved a real problem.

SDN Ours was similar, but very practical. We were already in lofts dealing with rodents. Insulation would be destroyed, contaminated or removed. We'd leave, and customers would still have a problem, just a different one. Cold houses, draughts, unhappy families.

Learning how to replace insulation properly just made sense. From there, customers asked about boarding, shelving and ladders. We were already trusted, already on site, so it was a natural progression.

RC If you take a root cause approach seriously, additional services often follow automatically. If you understand why pests are present, you start looking at proofing, drainage, environmental management and structural issues. That isn't upselling for the sake of it. It's problem-solving.

Proofing as a growth engine

PPC Paul, you mentioned proofing has had a major impact on your business. Can you talk us through that?

PC We started doing pest proofing properly around 2022. Since then, we've averaged around 600 to 700 proofing jobs a year. The average job value is between £500 and £600.

If you do the maths, that's over £1 million in additional income over a relatively short period. That's significant for any business.

What's important to say is that proofing hasn't replaced pest control. We couldn't do one without the other. Pest control remains the core service. But proofing has changed our income mix and, just as importantly, how clients perceive us.

We're seen as more professional, more thorough and more solution-focused.

PPC Has that required big changes internally?

PC Yes and no. We had to train people properly, invest in skills and make sure work was done to a high standard. But culturally, it aligned with what

we already believed in: fixing problems properly rather than repeatedly treating symptoms.

Education as a service

PPC Gemma, pest awareness training feels quite different to physical services like proofing. What impact has it had?

GS It's had a big impact, particularly on relationships. When customers understand what's going on, they're far more likely to engage with recommendations. That might be proofing, housekeeping changes or access issues.

It's also reduced frustration for technicians. There's nothing worse than repeatedly flagging the same risks and seeing nothing change. Pest awareness sessions allow those conversations to happen at a higher level within organisations.

Internally, it's been positive too. Team members are developing presentation skills, confidence and a deeper understanding of client environments. That's helped us expand into sites with stricter audit requirements, where education and documentation are expected.

Fewer customers, stronger relationships

PPC Shane, your business has pivoted quite heavily into additional services alongside pest control. What's that changed day to day?

SDN The biggest change is fewer customers, more value. I'm not chasing as many new leads because I'm doing more work per client. I'm already on site, already trusted, already selling to someone who knows me. That saves time and reduces marketing costs. It also gives us flexibility. If rodent work drops off seasonally, we can pivot to insulation or proofing work instead of sitting idle.

It's not about squeezing customers. It's about offering things that genuinely make sense in the context of the work you're already doing.

RC That's key. Once a client trusts you in one area, they're much more likely to use you elsewhere. We've seen that particularly with larger commercial clients who want fewer suppliers, not more.

Handling pushback and knowing when to stop

PPC A question that came up repeatedly was about difficult customers. At what point do you cut your losses when someone won't act on advice but keeps complaining?

SDN There's a limit to what you can do. You can either explain that you can't progress until key issues are addressed, or you offer to do the work for them at a price. Some customers are too busy or don't want the hassle. If you can solve it for them, great. If not, sometimes a third-party referral is the right answer. You can't take responsibility for things outside your control.

> **"It's not about squeezing customers. It's about offering things that genuinely make sense in the context of the work you're already doing."**

GS Communication is everything. Difficult customers can become good customers if trust is built. But that trust comes from being consistent, clear and honest.

If recommendations are framed as help rather than sales, they land very differently. Customers don't like being sold to, but they do like problems being solved.

Does upselling ever go too far?

PPC There's a concern that adding services can dilute focus. Has anyone experienced that?

PC Only if you forget what your core business is. Pest control has to remain central. If standards slip there, everything else falls apart.

RC Additional services only work if they're relevant. If they don't genuinely help the client, they won't stick and they'll damage trust.

SDN I'd add that you don't have to do everything yourself. Outsourcing or partnering is sometimes the smartest move.

Final thoughts

PPC If someone reading this is thinking about adding services but feels unsure, what's your advice?

GS Focus on helping, not selling.

PC Look at what you already see every day on site. The opportunities are usually right there.

SDN Invest in skills or outsource what you don't understand.

RC Ask better questions. Good conversations lead to better work.

Upselling, when done properly, isn't about pushing extras. As this panel shows, it's about fixing problems properly, building trust and creating more resilient pest control businesses.

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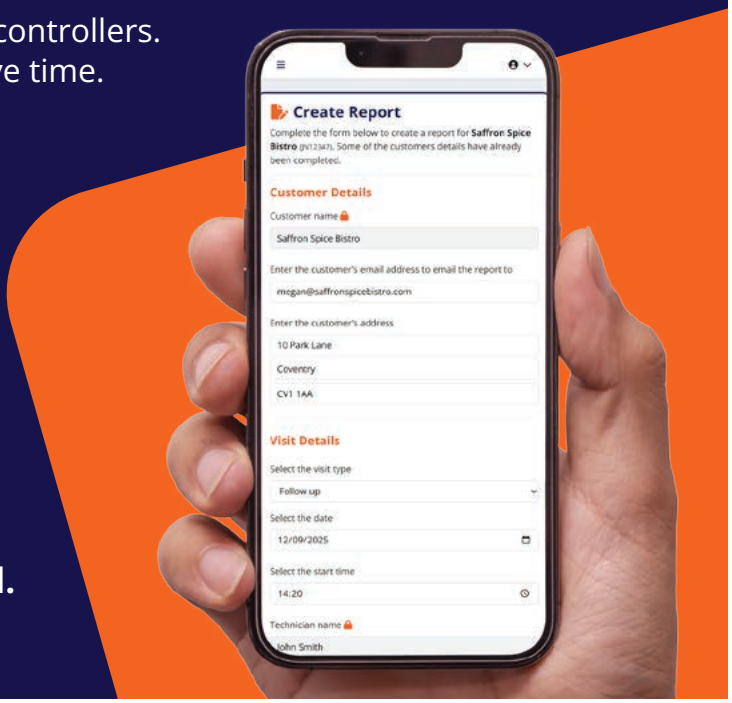

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RECOGNISING THE SIGNS, REDUCING THE RISKS:

UNDERSTANDING CONSUMER VULNERABILITY

Louise Baxter MBE, Head of the National Trading Standards Scams Team , Joint CEO of Consumer Friend and Non-Executive Director at TrustMark, talks about the importance of recognising consumer vulnerability, and how pest professionals can make a difference in the homes they visit every day.

When I start talking about consumer vulnerability, people often assume I'm here to spoil their day. "Here we go," they think, "another box-ticking exercise about how to be nice."

But this about something very real: how we can spot when a customer needs extra support, protect our businesses from unnecessary complaints, and, most importantly, help people who might not have anyone else looking out for them.

The reality of vulnerability

A survey by NICE recently found that over two-thirds of UK consumers show one or more characteristics of potential vulnerability. That's not a small niche group - that's most of the people we deal with.

When I started in trading standards back in 2002, the definition of "vulnerable" was outdated: someone weak, frail, probably old, and easily hurt. Today, we know vulnerability is far more complex. It isn't about age or weakness. It's about circumstance.

A person might be living with dementia. They might be struggling financially, recently bereaved, lonely, or simply overwhelmed by a stressful life event. Vulnerability can be visible or invisible. And here's the big one: any of us can be vulnerable at any time.

I learned that the hard way when I went through a divorce. It wasn't until years later that I realised how much that situation clouded my judgement. I made decisions that, looking back, I'd never make now. That's situational vulnerability – when life knocks you sideways for a bit, and your usual filters don't work properly.

> "And here's the big one: any of us can be vulnerable at any time."

Why this matters to pest professionals

You might be wondering, "What's this got to do with pest control?"Everything, actually.

Pest professionals go into people's homes - sometimes the only visitor that person has had in weeks. You might see neglect, signs of hoarding, loneliness, even abuse. You might notice that a customer doesn't quite understand what you've told them, or seems unusually anxious.

Ignoring those signs isn't just unkind: it's risky. Misunderstandings can lead to complaints, reputational damage or worse. But handled properly, these situations are an opportunity to show professionalism and empathy that sets you apart from competitors.

It's also worth remembering that, for most consumers, having a pest problem is a first-time experience. They're marketplace-vulnerable. They don't know what questions to ask, how long treatment should take, or what it should cost. And because they're stressed ("rats in the loft" does that to people), they're not necessarily taking everything in.

So, start from the assumption that every new customer is vulnerable until proven otherwise. It's not about treating people like they're fragile; it's about recognising that stress, confusion or fear can make anyone more likely to make poor decisions or feel overwhelmed.

Spotting the signs

Vulnerability doesn't wear a badge. It might show up as confusion, irritability, avoidance, or over-compliance. The trick is to listen and observe. Ask yourself:

- Can the customer repeat back what I've said, in their own words?
- Do they seem distracted or confused?
- Are they telling me about a major life event – divorce, bereavement, job loss – that might be affecting their judgement?
- Is there something about their environment that signals they may need extra time or reassurance?

I use a simple acronym REAL to remember how to respond:

- Retain: can they retain and repeat information?
- Evaluate: can they explain their decision?
- Access: can they access and understand what's being said?
- Listen: are they genuinely engaged, or just nodding along?

If any of those flags go up, slow things down. Re-explain. Offer information in writing. Summarise what's been agreed and leave them with a copy. It's not complicated – it's just good customer service with a human touch.

Plain English, please

One of my personal crusades is against what I call "big-word syndrome".

We have this terrible British habit of thinking we sound clever if we speak in complicated words and jargon. In reality, we're just blocking half the room from the conversation.

The average UK reading age is nine to twelve. That means if you can't explain your service to a Year 7 pupil, you're probably not explaining it clearly enough.

Write and speak plainly. No more than 25 words in a sentence. Avoid acronyms unless you're sure the other person knows them. If you say "TRB in accordance with CRRU guidelines" and your customer's eyes glaze over, that's on you, not them.

When life gets messy

We all have moments when we're vulnerable: illness, grief, divorce, redundancy. And sometimes, that vulnerability comes with shame or secrecy. People don't like being labelled. It's why I always say don't call someone "vulnerable", recognise that they're living with vulnerability.

It's a subtle but powerful shift. Telling someone "you're vulnerable" is like telling a drunk person they're drunk. You'll get pushback. Instead, focus on the situation, not the person: "It sounds like things have been difficult recently; how can I make this easier for you?"

I've trained over 13,000 people in this, and the number one fear is saying the wrong thing. But vulnerability isn't a minefield. It's an everyday human experience. You can't fix someone's life, but you can make your corner of it a bit easier to navigate.

The loneliness epidemic

One of the most heartbreaking aspects of my work is how often loneliness turns up in the data. Did you know that being lonely has the same health impact as smoking fifteen cigarettes a day?

That means when you chat to a customer who hasn't spoken to anyone all week, you might literally be improving their health just by showing kindness. A technician spending twenty minutes explaining a treatment calmly and clearly might be the best conversation that the customer has all month. Never underestimate that.

Organisational blind spots

Every business has them. You might be brilliant at safety training and health checks, but what about dementia awareness or mental health first aid? Vulnerability isn't static. The pressures change – cost of living, digital exclusion, AI, scams, you name it. The most resilient organisations regularly review their blind spots: complaints, feedback, near misses. If one customer struggled with a form, others probably will too. Fix it once and you'll help many.

Neurodiversity and communication

Around one in seven people in the UK is neurodivergent, and most won't tell you. That's why inclusive communication (calm tone, clear structure, simple text, and options for how information is received) helps everyone, not just those with diagnosed conditions.

Designing for everyone

When we design services with vulnerability in mind, we actually make them better for everyone.

Take the bendy straw. Invented so hospital patients could drink without lifting a cup. Or drop kerbs, originally for wheelchair users but now a blessing for anyone with a buggy or trolley. Or Alexa, designed for visually-impaired users but now helping millions of households keep life in order.

That's the idea of inclusive design: if you build with empathy from the start, the whole system works better. Think about how you take bookings, how you communicate before a visit, what your reports look like, and whether your website is accessible on a mobile phone. The easier you make it for the most vulnerable person to understand you, the easier it will be for everyone else.

Looking after yourself

There's one last piece we often forget: you can't pour from an empty cup.

Dealing with vulnerable consumers can take an emotional toll. I've seen it in trading standards, and you may have seen it too in pest control.

When you witness distressing situations (neglect, hoarding, loneliness), it sticks with you. Make sure you and your staff have a way to debrief. Talk to someone. Get support if you need it.

Shifting the question

I'll leave you with a thought I often end training with: Instead of asking, "What's wrong with this person?" ask, "What can I do differently?"

If a customer can't access your service or understand your explanation, that's not a failing on their part – it's a design flaw in ours. Every small change you make – clearer paperwork, a calmer tone, an extra five minutes on a visit makes your business more inclusive, more professional and, ultimately, more successful.

> **"That's not a small niche group - that's most of the people we deal with."**

Quick wins for your business

Give everyone basic awareness of mental health, safeguarding and scams.

Test your documents on a 12-year-old (or a chatbot set to "write for a 12-year-old").

Write "prefers large-print reports" instead of "visually impaired."

Email, post, phone, text – let people pick what works for them.

Treat complaints as free training. If one customer struggled, others will too.

WATCH BACK THE FULL TALK

Louise's whole talk at the BPCA Duty of Care Digital Forum is available now on YouTube

youtube.com/bpcavideo

LICENSED TO KILL CONNECT

AN INTERVIEW WITH MARCUS SCRUGGS FROM THE LICENSED TO KILL COMMUNITY

PPC Marcus, you spent more than a decade working in pest control before starting Sasquatch Pest Control. How did that journey begin?

MS Like a lot of people in this industry, I kind of fell into pest control. I started working for Cypress Creek Pest Control and ended up being there for more than ten years.

When you first start, it's easy to see it as just a job. But the longer you're in it, the more you realise how much there is to learn. Pest control is really about problem-solving. You're learning pest behaviour, understanding structures, figuring out how pests are getting in and how to stop them coming back.

After being in the industry that long, you start thinking about what you want the future to look like. For me, that eventually meant starting my own company.

But honestly, the thing which made that possible was the community I built through Licensed to Kill.

A gaming session that changed a career

PPC How did the Licensed to Kill (LTK) community influence that decision?

MS Through LTK I started networking with pest control owners and professionals from all over the country.

That's actually how I met the owner of Sasquatch Pest Control, Christopher Elling out in Washington State [Sasquatch Pest Control is a franchise].

And the funny thing is we met through gaming. We were playing together online, running raids and hanging out in voice chat. If it hadn't been for those late-night gaming sessions, we probably never would have crossed paths.

It's a good example of what the community does. People connect socially first, but over time you realise you're talking to incredibly skilled professionals.

Inside the community you've got people with advanced certifications, people servicing government facilities, hospitals and large manufacturing plants. There's a lot of expertise in the group.

Pest control as a career

PPC Do you think the industry still gets underestimated as a career?

MS For the everyday technician it can sometimes feel like a stepping stone job.

But if you stay in the industry long enough, you start noticing something interesting. Pest control attracts a lot of people as a second career.

You see people who realised they didn't want to spend their lives chained to a desk or inside four walls. Then they discover pest control and end up loving it.

In the US, it's a career where you can earn a living wage fairly quickly. There's also a pathway to business ownership that doesn't require huge barriers like expensive degrees.

If you're willing to learn and work hard, there's a real opportunity to build something.

That's part of the message we try to push through LTK. Level up your game, treat pest control as a profession and keep improving your skills.

The (virtual) water cooler

PPC Let's talk about LTK some more. How did the community begin?

MS Technicians don't really have a water cooler to stand around and talk at. Everybody's out on route, everybody's in their trucks, moving between jobs. If you let it be, the job can get very lonely.

There were years where my whole day was just driving between jobs listening to podcasts or talk radio. The only conversations I had were quick interactions with customers.

It prompted some of us to start doing group phone calls while we were working. Almost like a party line where technicians could talk throughout the day while they were on route.

Eventually, we realised we needed a better platform for it, and that's how the server started.

PPC Did you already have experience running an online community?

MS Yeah, before LTK I had run a gaming community for the game Conan Exiles. That gave me experience with Discord, organising events and managing an online group.

When we started Licensed to Kill, I realised those same tools could work really well for pest control.

At first it was just a small group of technicians talking shop and playing games. But over time more people joined, and it started turning into something bigger. Now we've got more than 500 members.

PPC What kind of discussions happen in the community?

MS A lot of knowledge sharing. One of the coolest things is seeing technicians from completely different environments learning from each other.

The US alone has almost every biome you can think of. So someone in the Deep South might be dealing mostly with insects, while someone up north might have rodents making up 80% of their work.

If you talk to someone who specialises in rodents, they've got behavioural insights and trapping

strategies you might never have thought about.

When those experiences get shared, everyone benefits. You start seeing technicians adapt techniques and improve results in the field. That kind of collaboration is really valuable.

Connecting younger technicians

PPC Does the platform also help bring newer technicians into the wider industry?

MS One thing we noticed is that the younger crowd, especially the under-45 group, isn't always connected to traditional trade associations the way they probably should be.

Through LTK we can share industry news, updates from organisations like the National Pest Management Association, BPCA and other useful resources.

But we're also doing something slightly different. We're helping technicians build professional networks earlier in their careers. That networking is already leading to real opportunities.

PPC What kind of opportunities?

MS We've seen a lot of career progression happen through the community. I started my own company.

Another member moved from being a technician into a branch manager role.

Two technicians recently moved from residential work into commercial food-grade service positions.

These kinds of stories are popping up all the time because people are starting to network with each other.

They're learning about companies, sharing job opportunities and helping each other move forward, and the interesting part is how naturally it happens.

There's no subscription, no sales pitch, no pressure. People are just hanging out.

But over time relationships form and people realise they trust each other.

LTK gives people a place to share knowledge, ask questions, network and sometimes just unwind after work.

PPC Have you taken LTK offline?

MS Yeah, we've done things like beer and wings nights, water park meetups during the summer, Christmas events and even trips to the Renaissance Festival in Houston.

Because members are spread across the country, those events happen in different regional hubs.

Gaming as the social glue

PPC And of course, gaming plays a big role in the community?

MS It does. Gaming is kind of the social glue that brings people together.

We host gaming nights, tournaments and streams. Sometimes we'll do digital dinner nights where everyone jumps on voice chat and eats together. We've even done movie nights.

One of the funniest things we did was during the Covid-19 lockdowns. In our Conan Exiles game server we dressed our characters in green, grabbed in-game beer and marched through the city for a digital St Patrick's Day parade.

It might sound silly, but those shared experiences build real friendships.

Automation and gamification

PPC You've also added EXP and level-ups to the server.

MS Yeah, we've deployed bots that manage different features of the Discord.

Some of them add experience points and levels when people participate in discussions or share knowledge. It's a simple gamification system that encourages engagement.

The bots also help organise events, run competitions and keep the server running smoothly.

Discord is really flexible, so we've been able to build tools that work well for the community.

PPC And I heard you run gaming tournaments and competitions?

MS We've got a Fall Guys tournament coming up where we'll have big lobbies of 40 to 100 players competing.

And we like to make it interesting. We're giving away a FlowZone backpack sprayer and an Arclight probe as prizes.

There's no entry fee. It's just about building camaraderie across the industry.

PPC What games are you and the community playing at the moment?

MS Battlefield has been a big one for us, especially early on.

But the games change pretty quickly depending on what's popular. Fall Guys works well for big community events because you can get large groups playing together.

The games themselves aren't really the point though. They're just the thing that gets people into voice chat.

Once you're there, the conversation naturally shifts to pest control, business ideas and everything else.

Looking ahead

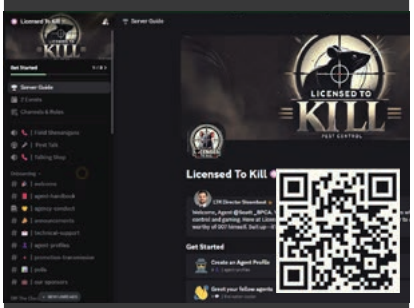
PPC What's next for the community?

MS The goal is just to keep building it. We want to keep growing the network, keep sharing knowledge and keep creating opportunities for technicians.

If people can level up their skills, improve their careers or even start their own businesses because of connections they made through LTK, then I think we're doing something positive for the industry.

"It's basically a digital water cooler for the pest control industry."

GET INVOLVED



Interested in joining the conversation? Licensed to Kill is open to pest professionals who want to connect with others in the industry, share ideas and unwind after work.

You can listen to the Licensed to Kill podcast here: **https://open.spotify.com/show/032iBDHKytatvGWMxtj20h**

Or join the Licensed to Kill Discord community to chat with technicians and business owners from across the industry.

MEET THE MEMBER

PUZZLING IT OUT

PROBLEM SOLVING PROWESS WITH CONCEPT

From drainage inspections and remote monitoring to drones and bird control, Concept Pest Control Operations Manager Neill Gibson is helping protect one of Belfast's busiest transport hubs from pests.

PPC Editor Kat Shaw and BPCA's Technical Manager, Niall Gallagher, took a detour away from the Belfast Forum to meet with Neill and chat about the city's new train station, Concept Group and his love of a good challenge.

"When Belfast's new Grand Central Station opened, everyone knew the pest risks would be significant from day one."

The station, in the new Weavers Cross development of Belfast, is a busy hub. Thousands of people move through the site every day. It's surrounded by ageing drains, heavy traffic and dense city infrastructure.

Add food outlets, sheltered spaces and Belfast's well-known pigeon and rat populations, and it quickly becomes clear why pest management needed to be part of the plan from the start.

For Neill Gibson, the challenge was exactly the sort of problem-solving work that first drew him into the industry 13 years ago.

"A year open at the station and it's already one of the biggest sites we've got. The old Europa Bus Centre was terrible for pigeons, so when this opened everybody wanted to get off to a good start with pest control" Neill explained.

Rat pressure in the city

Rodent pressure in Belfast has become a growing concern in recent years, particularly around ageing drainage systems and areas prone to flooding.

"Drains are bad around here, and heavy rain brings rats up. Shaftesbury Square was rat central. Fatbergs were being pulled out all over the place and the city was rampant with them for a while" Neill said.

He believes reduced sewer baiting contributed to the problem.

A mix of old and new technologies

Grand Central Station has become a showcase site for combining traditional methods with modern pest management technology.

Rodent pressure in Belfast has become a growing concern in recent years, particularly around ageing drainage systems and areas prone to flooding.

"This is one of our biggest remote monitoring sites," Neill said.

"The outer protection is remote monitoring, while the inside still uses more standard bait stations. We still visit regularly, but the technology helps us map activity much more effectively. That investment in technology now includes drone capability."

"We've opted for drones and I'm trained on them now. We still do hawking as well, but birds can be unpredictable if they fancy a day off" Neill explained.

The station team also moved away from traditional bird spikes in favour of bird deterrent gel systems. The old station had spikes everywhere, so we wanted something less unsightly."

"The gel pots have been excellent for pigeons and starlings. We're getting a cherry picker in next week to install them throughout the inside of the station as well. It's going to be a big job! Even with the best systems in place, human behaviour still creates challenges.

"The security guards start saying, 'We like the pigeons'. Then eventually somebody starts feeding them. It's an issue wherever you go, and it's done with good intentions but has negative consequences."

A small industry with strong relationships

Northern Ireland's pest management community remains surprisingly close-knit.

"Northern Ireland is so small that everybody tends to know each other, I'll get calls from people saying, 'You're working next door, have you had any issues?'" Neill said.

That culture of collaboration also extends into how Concept develops technicians internally.

"When we train new pest controllers, we tell them it's never an insult if somebody else checks your site," he explained.

"You can become blind to a problem sometimes and a fresh set of eyes can completely change your thinking."

That practical, team-first mindset has become central to how Neill manages the business's seven full-time pest professionals.

"We work like a family and fight like a family sometimes," he joked.

"But a good sense of humour is important in this job. If you don't have one, you probably won't last very long."

Leading from the front

Although now an Operations Manager, Neill still prefers being on-site whenever possible.

"There's only so much you can do over the phone. That hands-on approach has helped earn trust within the team" he said.

"I won't ask anybody to do something I wouldn't do myself," he explained. "I think that comes from my background. I didn't come through university or management schemes. I came through blue-collar work and I've done all the difficult jobs myself over the years.

"If somebody's new, I want them to see me turning up and helping with the dirty work too. Whether that's drainage work or dealing with difficult access sites."

Some of those sites include massive construction cranes, where pigeon activity around operating systems can create health and safety concerns for engineers.

"Everybody wants the crane jobs, we draw straws for it," he laughed. "You're right up at the top dealing with pigeons nesting around the engine units and operating sections. There's a lot of dust and fouling in very confined spaces."

From farm life to pest management

Neill's route into pest management was driven by the 2007 financial crash and the recession that followed.

After leaving school, he worked in joinery and construction, then loading salt onto boats around Belfast docks. He was laid off and moved into a role doing oven cleaning.

"It was awful work," he admitted. "I was sitting in the van one day looking through Gumtree and saw Concept were hiring." Half an hour after his interview, he was offered the job.

"I never set out to become a pest controller, but once I got into it, it just made sense." Growing up outdoors also helped shape his interest in wildlife management and pest control. "I grew up on my grandfather's farm in Dromore, County Down," he said.

"I wasn't a PlayStation kid. I was outside all the time, fishing, chasing pigeons or out with the dog. Being able to tell the difference between fox runs, badger runs and other signs gives you a good grounding."

Neill now has wildlife qualifications and deer stalking licences, to bolster his experiences on the farm. "Being able to understand wildlife behaviour definitely helped when I moved into pest control."

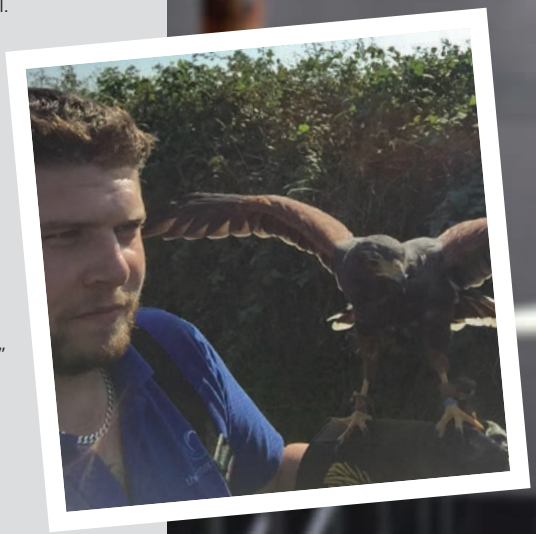
Problem solving keeps people in the industry

Ask Neill what his favourite pest species is, though, and he doesn't hesitate.

"It's not about the species," he said. "It's the problem solving. The more complex the issue, the better. It's such a varied job, that's what keeps it interesting. The more difficult the problem, the more I enjoy it.

"Spending days trying to figure out what's actually going on at a site, that's the part I love."

And at home, it sounds like the next generation may already be following in his footsteps. "My little boy loves hearing about pigeons and wildlife," Neill laughed. "He keeps saying he wants to become a pest controller."



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SETTING NEW TECHNICIANS UP FOR SUCCESS: INSIDE BPCA'S ONBOARDING TRAINING PROGRAMME

Karen Dawes, BPCA
Training and Professional Development Manager

Starting a career in pest management is exciting but it can also feel like stepping into a completely new world. There's legislation to understand, pests to identify, equipment to use, and a huge amount of responsibility from day one.

That's exactly why at BPCA we created the Onboarding Training Programme; a structured, supportive pathway that helps new technicians build competence, confidence, and the right habits for a long, successful career.

This programme isn't just about giving people knowledge. It's about helping them apply that knowledge in the field, reflect on what they've learned, and grow into safe, capable professionals. In many ways, it forms the basis of a licence to practice; learning the theory while gaining real life experience, with the reassurance of a team behind you.

COMPETENCE FIRST

One of the earliest requirements in the onboarding journey is completing BPCA's Using Rodenticides Safely training course and achieving the Level 2 Award in Rodent Management.

This early qualification milestone gives new technicians the essential knowledge they need to work safely and legally, and it enables them to begin working more independently in the field.

From there, the Onboarding Programme builds steadily. New technicians learn the fundamentals of pest biology, legislation, safe working practices, and professional conduct but always with a focus on competence, not just theory.

They're encouraged to put learning into practice straight away, supported by their organisation and guided by BPCA's structured materials.

This approach helps technicians understand why things are done, not just how. It's the difference between memorising information and becoming confident professionals.

A TEAM EFFORT

One of the most important parts of the Onboarding Programme is the support technicians receive from their mentors or line managers. BPCA designed the programme to be a team effort, because no one becomes a competent pest professional alone.

BPCA provides the structure, training, and guidance. Employers provide the coaching, encouragement, and real world context. When those two elements come together, the results are powerful.

Many organisations tell us that onboarding has strengthened their internal training culture, giving managers a clear framework to follow and new recruits a sense of belonging from day one.

LEWIS WARLOW – PEST SOLUTIONS

The portfolio component of the onboarding programme played a key role in my development as a trainee. Documenting each new experience in the field encouraged deeper reflections on my performance and helped identify areas for improvement.

It provided a structured and measurable way to link practical work with technical knowledge.

I particularly enjoyed the joint monthly reviews where I could hear how my peers were progressing and receive valuable feedback from my manager and team leader.

It also established a habit of critically reviewing my work and maintaining CPD records, a practice I have continued ever since.

LEARNING TO LEARN

Every onboarding candidate builds a portfolio of their field experiences. This isn't just a revision tool - though it certainly helps when exam time comes around.

It's also a way of getting technicians into the habit of recording what they've learned, reflecting on their practice, and recognising their own progress.

This habit becomes invaluable later, when CPD becomes mandatory.

By the time they're fully qualified, technicians already see CPD as something positive; a source of learning, a way to grow, and a tool for developing their career.

In many ways, onboarding helps shift the culture around CPD from "something I have to do" to "something that helps me get better".

HOW DO YOU EAT YOUR CRÈME EGG

BPCA understands that every business – and every technician – is different. That's why the Onboarding Programme is available in several formats:

- Framework only: A structured training path for organisations who want to deliver the training themselves
- Training only: Access to BPCA's high quality training materials to support in house delivery
- Managed training: Access to training and monthly support from BPCA's training team throughout the programme
- All inclusive: Training materials, monthly BPCA support, classroom training, and exam fees all bundled together.

This flexibility means organisations can choose the level of support that fits their needs, resources, and training style.

VALUE FOR MONEY

While there is a cost to the Onboarding Programme, it has been designed to be genuinely cost effective. For most organisations, the investment equates to roughly one mouse job per week.

And because technicians are encouraged to work independently, while still being supported and supervised, that cost is quickly recouped.

In other words, onboarding doesn't just build competence. It builds capacity. New technicians start contributing earlier, with the reassurance that they're working safely, legally, and in line with industry best practice.

YOU SET THE PACE

While the Onboarding Programme is designed to be completed within six months, BPCA knows that real life doesn't always run to schedule.

Every candidate is different, and the programme is flexible enough to adapt. Support continues for as long as the technician needs it because the goal is competence, not speed.

Each programme ends with an online professional discussion. This isn't a pass or fail assessment. It's a supportive conversation that reviews the candidate's portfolio, explores their understanding, and identifies any gaps. From there, BPCA and the employer work together to help the technician prepare for the Level 2 Award or Certificate in Pest Management.

A strong start to a strong career

The programme gives new technicians the best possible start; structured learning, real world experience, strong support, and a clear path to qualification. It helps organisations build confident, competent teams – and it helps technicians feel proud, prepared, and ready for the next step in their career.

For more details about the BPCA Onboarding Programme contact **training@bpca.org.uk**

MARTIN ROSE KING – BOUNTY PEST CONTROL

We've recently put our newest technician through the BPCA Onboarding Programme, and the difference it's made to the business has been remarkable. The structure and support meant they became confident and competent much faster than our previous onboarding process. Prior to BPCA creating an Onboarding Programme we didn't have a set structure for bringing new people into our organisation, so I confidently say it has been a game-changer for us. Because new technicians are encouraged to work independently, while still having guidance from both BPCA and our team, they start contributing real value early on. For us, the programme has been an excellent, cost effective investment.

"Starting a career in pest management is exciting"

ROB MILES – HINTON PEST CONTROL

I changed jobs about eight months ago, so was very new to the pest control industry. The Onboarding Programme helped immensely with what I needed to know, breaking down everything so I could understand real situations, not just the theory. Having the support from all the team at Hinton Pest Control and BPCA made a huge difference and helped me gain confidence. It was honestly the best start I could have hoped for in pest management.

CASE STUDY

STARTING A CAREER IN PEST MANAGEMENT WITH PEST SOLUTIONS

Adam Stewart, Pest Solutions, talks about his experience on the BPCA Onboarding Programme, reflecting on how, as a graduate with a technical background, he successfully transitioned into pest management through structured training and strong mentoring.

WHY PEST MANAGEMENT?

After completing a BSc (Hons) in Building Surveying, the transition into pest management felt like a natural next step. A strong grounding in building pathology, environmental factors, and health and safety provided a strong technical foundation for understanding pest behaviour, access points, and risk management.

Alongside this, experience in customer service helped build my confidence in communicating clearly with clients.

The appeal of pest management lay in its blend of technical problem solving, hands on work, and the opportunity to make a visible impact on public health and property protection. Each day brings new challenges, environments, and people, ideal for someone who enjoys variety and practical application of knowledge.

SUPPORT FROM PEST SOLUTIONS

The structured Onboarding Programme played a major role in building early confidence. From day one, the environment felt welcoming and inclusive.

Mentoring and shadowing opportunities helped bridge the gap between theory and real world practice and provided safe, guided exposure to real jobs.

Team support created a sense of belonging and reinforced long term commitment to the role and organisation.

SUPPORT FROM BPCA

The BPCA learning resources stood out for their clarity and flexibility. Online modules allowed learning at a comfortable pace and pre-recorded webinars helped deepen understanding of the industry.

The training covered essential areas such as pest biology, control methods, and safety procedures in a balanced and comprehensive way.

The BPCA team were approachable and responsive whenever questions came up, making the learning experience even stronger.

GROWING CONFIDENCE

Although still early in the journey, I feel my confidence has grown significantly.

Technical knowledge is expanding steadily and practical experience is building through real world jobs. A strong professional support network is forming within both Pest Solutions and the wider BPCA community.

For me, the Onboarding Programme has created a solid platform for long term development in the sector.

For anyone beginning the programme my advice would be to make full use of the resources available, lean on your mentors and stay on top of your CPD from the start to build good habits.

Level 2 Pest Management Award - 5-day classroom course and exam

Develop the skills and knowledge you require as a public health pest control technician, covering techniques for managing rats, mice, wasps, flies, bed bugs and more. Study for your RSPH Level 2 Award in Pest Management with a 5-day classroom course and six weeks' worth of online learning with BPCA. Prepare to be a public health pest control technician with this industry-standard qualification delivered by experts in pest management. The perfect door into the pest management industry!

WATCH NOW

Take a behind the scenes look at BPCA's residential Level 2 Award in Pest Management training course.

Bulk booking discounts

We now offer discounts on bulk bookings for our online Level 2 Award in Pest Management course, for both members and non-members: 0-2 licences – standard price; 3-9 licences – 20% discount; 10+ licences – 40% discount. Exam costs remain the same.
Contact the training team to find out more.

Terms and conditions

All costs are members only and exclude VAT. Non-member prices are available at **bpca.org.uk/training**

Venue details are provisional and may change – please check the BPCA website before booking.

BPCA reserves the right to cancel a programme if insufficient bookings have been received.

Delegates will be offered an alternative date or a full refund of the programme fee if a programme is cancelled. BPCA will not be liable for any costs incurred by the delegates.

training@bpca.org.uk
01332 225 113
bpca.org.uk/training

events@bpca.org.uk
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Exams for Level 2, Certified Field Biologist, Certified Technical Inspector and Fumigation Unit 1.

Date	Location
24/07/2026	Milton Keynes
06/08/2026	BPCA, Derby
11/09/2026	Stafford
29/09/2026	Basingstoke
13/10/2026	Belfast
23/10/2026	BPCA, Derby
20/11/2026	Milton Keynes
11/12/2026	Stafford

Event/ course name	From (£)	Date	Location
GUEST WEBINAR: A forensic approach to food safety in pest control 🔒	Members Only	01/07/2026	Online
KEYNOTE WEBINAR: Employment Rights Bill 🔒	Members Only	08/07/2026	Online
Non-member open evening - Learn about BPCA membership	Free for everyone	17/07/2026	Online
Hands-on practical pest management	250.00	18/07/2026	Milton Keynes
Level 2 Award in Pest Management (residential)	1,165.00	19-24/07/2026	Milton Keynes
Certificated Field Biologist exam preparation course	288.00	04-05/08/2026	BPCA, Derby
MEET THE MEMBER WEBINAR: Birds, brains and brotherly love with Reaper Bird Control 🔒	Members Only	05/08/2026	Online
DIGITAL FORUM 39: your online pest event	Free for everyone	12/08/2026	Online
WEBINAR: Textile pests – identification, damage and management strategies 🔒	Members Only	02/09/2026	Online
Certificate in Bird Management	216.00	03/09/2026	BPCA, Derby
Hands-on practical pest management	250.00	05/09/2026	Stafford
Level 2 Certificate in Pest Management (residential)	1,538.00	05-12/09/2026	Stafford
Level 2 Award in Pest Management (residential)	1,165.00	06-11/09/2026	Stafford
KEYNOTE WEBINAR: Delivering specification-ready pest management with Paul Westgate 🔒	Members Only	17/09/2026	Online
Starting out in pest control	132.00	21/09/2026	Online
Hands-on practical pest management	250.00	22/09/2026	BPCA, Derby
Basingstoke Training Forum	Free for everyone	30/09/2026	Basingstoke
Safe use of Aluminium Phosphide	358.00	05-06/10/2026	Brighton
DEBATE WEBINAR: What role will we play in Yellow-legged (Asian) hornet control? 🔒	Members Only	07/10/2026	Online
Belfast Training Forum	Free for everyone	14/10/2026	Belfast
Becoming a Field Biologist/Technical Inspector	132.00	15/10/2026	Online
Level 2 Award in Pest Management (non-residential)	930.00	19-23/10/2026	BPCA, Derby
Level 3 Award in Safe Use of Fumigants for the Management of Invertebrate Pests	1081.00	26-29/10/2026	BPCA, Derby
Hands-on practical pest management	250.00	14/11/2026	Milton Keynes
Yorkshire Training Forum	Free for everyone	18/11/2026	Leeds
Non-member open evening - Learn about BPCA membership	Free for everyone	20/11/2026	Online

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