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See Pages 5 For Details



PEST CONTROL TECHNOLOGY

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TOP

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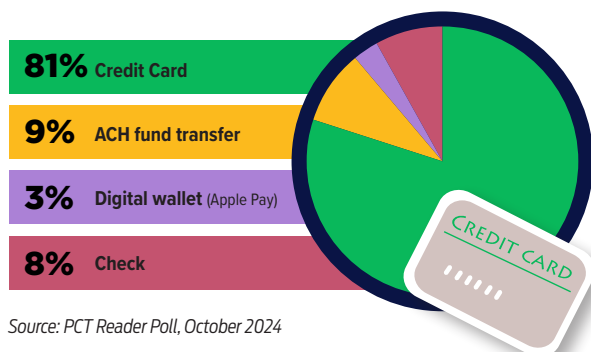
PCT has expanded our research capabilities with The Pulse: Digging Deeper, weekly online polls on topics PCOs are talking about. If you would like to have your voice heard, contact us at www.pctonline.com/contact. Participate in our latest poll at www.pctonline.com/polls.



READER POLL RESULTS

PCT keeps a pulse on the industry with timely reader poll questions. Here are results from a recent poll question for pest management professionals:

WHICH OF THE FOLLOWING IS THE MOST POPULAR WAY CUSTOMERS PAY FOR YOUR PEST CONTROL SERVICES?



Source: PCT Reader Poll, October 2024

1996 ★ 2025 TECHNICIAN of the Year AWARDS

Nominate a Technician of the Year Online

In April, PCT launched its annual Technician of the Year awards program. The awards recognize a trio of standout service professionals in the residential, commercial and termite categories. Be sure to nominate your company's standout service professionals. You can nominate a Technician of the Year online at www.pctonline.com/tech25.

Survey Takers Win Gift Cards

PCT announced four winners of \$50 Visa gift cards for participating in PCT research conducted by third-party firm Readex Research. Results from this survey are in PCT's State of the Mosquito Market report in this issue. The following PMPs were awarded gift cards for completing the surveys:

- Efrain Velasco, B.C.E., technical director, Lloyd Pest Control, San Diego, Calif.
- Alan Harlan, vice president of service and quality control, Team Pest USA, Loganville, Ga.
- Mark Franz, operations manager, Superior Pest Service, Arundel, Maine
- Anthony Mortellaro, account executive, Rentokil North America



Efrain Velasco

Thank you to all of those who take PCT surveys. Your participation provides the industry with valuable research findings!

Can't-Miss Video Interviews

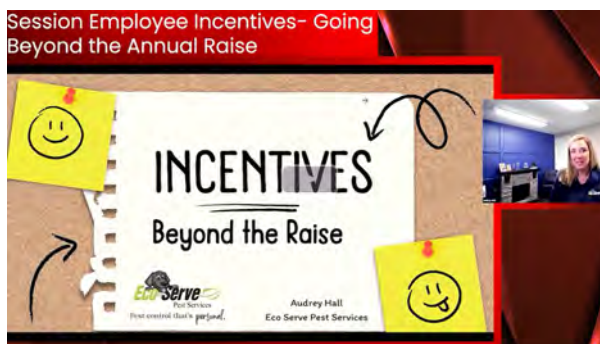
The PCT staff has been busy with video interviews with leading PCOs, technical/training directors, entomologists and others. Recently added videos interviews include:

- Kwik Kill's Neerland on Being a Second-Generation PCO
- Doug Foster on Termite Control
- Jonathan Richardson on Rodents and Zoonotic Diseases
- PPMA's Jim Fredericks on Pest Weather Forecast Findings

Visit bit.ly/3x8CXZZ to watch these and other videos.

On-Demand Webinars

PCT hosts informative webinars throughout the year, covering both technical and business management issues. If you are not able to attend these webinars the day of the event, you can access them on demand at bit.ly/3wt2D3a. In our most recent webinar, Audrey Hall, president of Eco Serve Pest Services, Orchard Park, N.Y., discussed how her company uses strategic incentive programs to attract and retain top talent.



SCAN & DISCOVER

Point your phone camera at the **QR codes** below to learn more about the latest offerings for the pest management industry.



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Taking the Temperature of the HVAC Industry

When members of the pest control industry want to examine trends in similar service-based businesses they often look to the HVAC (heating, ventilation and air conditioning) industry.

In PCT's October 2023 cover story, "M&A Forecast," PCT contributing writer Anne Nagro wrote that pest control and HVAC are equally attractive to private equity (PE) firms because "they're large, growing industries. They're deeply fragmented and dominated by small, local, family-owned companies. They provide essential, non-discretionary services that generate strong recurring revenue. These traits make both industries ripe for rolling up."

When it comes to private equity, in many ways HVAC serves as a "crystal ball" for the pest control industry, especially regarding consolidation, scaling and eventual public offerings or resale.

So, in October 2024 when The Wall Street Journal (WSJ) published the article "America's New Millionaire Class: Plumbers and HVAC Entrepreneurs" (*reprinted in PCT this month, page 50*), the pest control industry took notice. The article explored how PE firms are heavily investing in skilled-trade small businesses, which is creating a new class of millionaires among blue-collar entrepreneurs. At one time, the WSJ article noted, these trades were seen as modest operations, but they are now being rolled up into larger companies by investors aiming to boost profits through economies of scale and better business practices.

PCT reached out to adviser Kemp Anderson and asked him to pen a WSJ companion piece (*page 68*). Anderson drew parallels to the pest control and HVAC industries, explaining that PE firms "buy small, fragmented businesses at lower valuations, consolidate them into a larger company and sell at a premium, increasing profitability through efficiencies and growth, while leveraging debt financing to boost returns and magnify investment gains, making the company more attractive to buyers. This strategy is why industries like pest control, HVAC, healthcare services and home services have seen massive PE-driven consolidation — turning small businesses into multi-billion-dollar industry leaders."

Anderson also took a deep dive into PE buying trends and what this could mean for the pest control industry. "If PE firms have trillions to invest and have rolled up 800 HVAC, plumbing and electrical companies since 2022, it can happen to the pest control space."

Whether or not private equity is a good or bad thing for the pest control industry is open for debate, but PE certainly is reshaping it. As the WSJ article noted, PE firms seek to profit by running larger, more profitable operations and "their growth marks a major shift, taking home-services firms away from family operators by offering mom-and-pop shops seven-figure and eight-figure paydays. It is a contrast from previous generations, when more owners handed companies down to their children or employees."

That's not to say there will not be space for small to mid-size family-owned pest control businesses, including new entrants. In my interview with Rentokil CEO Andy Ransom (*page 34*), he expressed amazement that the number of pest control firms in the U.S. has stayed relatively constant during the past 15 years, despite rapid industry consolidation. "It's an industry that continues to grow at the bottom with new entrants that become bigger, some that, ultimately, become acquisitions."

And that opportunity for small and mid-size pest control companies to grow remains. As one PCT Top 100 CEO recently told PCT, "Right now, I think the market is full of potential. There are businesses doing \$12-\$15 million today that, in five years, will be doing \$30, \$40, maybe even \$50 million. The opportunity is out there. This industry is strong, and growth like that is very real." **PCT**

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High-Profile Hantavirus Death Underscores Importance of Rodent Control

CLEVELAND — In March, the Santa Fe, N.M., medical examiner announced that Betsy Arakawa, wife of Oscar-winning actor Gene Hackman, died from hantavirus pulmonary syndrome, a rare rodent-borne respiratory disease. Arakawa's death underscores the important role that pest management professionals (PMPs) play when it comes to protecting public health.

Dr. Kathy Heinsohn, technical and training entomologist at American Pest, Fulton, Md., reminded that PMPs in the desert Southwest should be particularly aware of hantavirus, which is primarily linked to the deer mouse. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) began monitoring hantavirus closely following a deadly outbreak in the Four Corners area (New Mexico, Arizona, Colorado and Utah) in 1993. During that outbreak,



In the U.S., hantavirus is most often spread by deer mice.

10 people died in just eight weeks, which spurred heightened awareness and response.

"This region serves as the natural habitat of the deer mouse, which carries the virus," Heinsohn said. "People engaging in outdoor activities like hiking and camping are more likely to encounter the deer

mouse and its droppings or urine, increasing the chances of exposure."

While this recent high-profile case is specific to the desert Southwest, it serves as a reminder that PMPs — regardless of geographic location — should remain vigilant and up to date with training on how to mitigate risks by posed rodents. "Rodents and their droppings are known to carry several harmful pathogens, including hantavirus, which can be transmitted to humans and pets," Heinsohn said.

PMPs who perform rodent work must take special precautions to avoid exposure to potentially harmful pathogens like hantavirus. Heinsohn recommends using proper personal protective equipment (PPE). "At the very least, PMPs should wear N95 masks or respirators, along with protective eyewear, such as goggles," she

PCO News



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Karla Sullivan (left), Billy Olesen (middle) and Chuck Sullivan (right).

Pest Stop, serving communities from South Seattle through Northwest Oregon since 2019, announced the sale of the company to Billy Olesen, adopted son of longtime owner Chuck Sullivan. This transition marks a new chapter for the family-owned business, which has roots in pest management dating back to 1975.

Sullivan started **Chuck Sullivan Exterminators** in 1989, later rebranding it to Pest Stop in 2019. The company says it now blends decades of experience with a fresh perspective and a continued commitment to excellence, environmental responsibility and community engagement.

Olesen, A.C.E., who was awarded ESA's Associate Certified Entomologist Professionalism Award in 2022, brings a unique blend of expertise and passion to Pest Stop. Having learned the trade from his father, Olesen is deeply familiar with the company's history and values.

Daren DeRosia, owner of **CoverAll Pests**, a Houston, Texas-based pest management company specializing in servicing multi-family housing, announced that the company has reached 10 years in business.

The company celebrated its longevity in the pest control industry at its recent 2025 annual meeting. As part of the celebration, DeRosia thanked his staff and loyal customers for helping CoverAll Pests reach this milestone.



The CoverAll Pests team.



Mosquito Hunters CEO Andy Fuller unveils the new logo.

Mosquito Hunters has rebranded to **Pest Hunters-Mosquito Hunters**, marking the final phase of its transformation into a full-service pest control provider.

This shift reflects an expansion of the brand's service offerings to combat a wider range of pests, including ants, spiders, rodents, cockroaches and more — alongside its signature mosquito and tick control services.

The announcement was made by CEO Andy Fuller during the company's annual "Hunterpalooza" conference, held March 14-16, in Orlando, Fla.

Fuller, who founded Mosquito Hunters more than 11 years ago, said this evolution reflects years of listening to customers and responding to market demand.



said. “Because rodent droppings can become aerosolized in dry environments, these precautions are essential to reduce the risk of inhaling harmful particles.”

For areas where hantavirus is a concern, additional steps are necessary, and Heinsohn suggests spraying rodent droppings and nests with a mild bleach or ammonia solution before cleaning to reduce the potential for aerosolization. “This simple step can significantly lower the chances of exposure,” said Heinsohn, who added that when cleaning up, it’s best not to sweep or vacuum (because of aerosolization concerns) after wetting down surfaces. — Brad Harbison

Wayne Golden Leadership and Action Scholarship Established

WASHINGTON — Black Ownership Matters (BOM) made a special announcement at its annual dinner meeting at NPMA Legislative Day in Washington, D.C., sharing the establishment of the Wayne Golden Leadership and Action Scholarship.

Golden attended the dinner via FaceTime to hear the announcement of the scholarship that will carry on the impact and legacy he’s made in the pest control industry.



Wayne Golden

The \$1,000 annual scholarship will be crowdfunded by multiple people through NPMA’s Pest Management Foundation, Neighborly Pest Management President Jim Steed said. “I know how many people love Wayne and have been helped by him during his time in pest control, and I wanted to give everyone the chance to be [financially] a part of this,” he said.

While Golden has had a long, distinguished career both at Orkin and Terminix, in many ways he has been a behind-the-scenes contributor, heavily focused on operations and content to let others bask in the spotlight. Golden recently retired from a long career at Rollins as assistant vice president of government relations.

PCT spoke with Golden on the recognition of this scholarship, and he said when

he heard the news during the BOM dinner, he was “surprised, honored and emotional.”

“The reason I got involved in BOM after my retirement was not to build my legacy, but to share my knowledge. Even though business practices have changed, running

a good business model has not changed,” Golden said. The scholarship’s criteria still needs to be finalized, but Golden said he hopes it can be geared toward supporting mentorship and networking in the small-business community, preferably BOM members. — Amanda Joerdt

CETANE

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<p>2024</p> <p>PestCo</p> <p>has acquired</p> <p>Enter-Sys Pest Control</p>	<p>2024</p> <p>MOVER</p> <p>has acquired</p> <p>SAFEMATE PEST CONTROL</p>	<p>2024</p> <p>Grasshopper</p> <p>has acquired</p> <p>ForBetter Green Tree & Lawn</p>

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PPMA Releases 2024 Annual Report

FAIRFAX, Va. — The Professional Pest Management Alliance (PPMA), which serves as the consumer marketing and public outreach arm of the National

Pest Management Association (NPMA), shared its 2024 annual report, which centers around the theme “Level Up Results, Level Up Impact.”

The report showcases how PPMA’s collective efforts — spanning media outreach, digital advertising, video content creation

and more — worked in tandem to deliver both immediate and long-term value for the entire industry. In 2024, several PPMA programs significantly expanded their reach and impact.

Building on the momentum of the 2021 Out of Sight campaign, the organization launched What Grows There, a new educational series highlighting the hidden dangers pests pose to homeowners. The campaign resonated widely, generating 6.6 million impressions across social media and content syndication, along with 139.4 million media impressions.

The Mainframe platform also saw a major redesign, offering pest control companies a modern, user-friendly interface with customizable tools, industry insights and trending content — making it easier than ever for businesses to grow, PPMA said.

PPMA’s digital strategies were successful, with paid social media campaigns on platforms like Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, TikTok and Pinterest earning 68.5 million impressions, while content syndication on trusted sites brought in another 178.2 million.

Media outreach efforts hit new heights as well, placing targeted messages in high-profile outlets such as AccuWeather, USA Today and AARP Magazine. Altogether, these efforts delivered a staggering 1.1 billion media impressions.

To learn more about the annual report, visit www.npmapestworld.org/ppma.

WorkWave User Conference Recap

DALLAS — Members of the pest control, lawn and landscape, and other service industries saddled up in Dallas, Texas for the three-day WorkWave 2025 Beyond Service User Conference, Feb. 3-5.

Sessions highlighted key metrics for business growth in specific areas, including: the gender gap in relatively male-dominated industries; family generational transitions; how to set price increases and customer retention; streamlining merger and acquisition processes; and more.

The conference was a chance for PestPac users to learn more about WorkWave’s suite of software tools including its latest introduction, Wavelytics. The event included hands-on demonstrations, networking across industries and learning



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TOP 10

THINGS TO KNOW ABOUT EXCLUSION

Pest exclusion is crucial for pest control professionals as it provides a long-term, preventative solution that reduces reliance on chemicals, enhances customer satisfaction and ensures compliance with health and safety regulations. Here are 10 things to know:

1

Be Proactive vs. Reactive:

Effective exclusion starts before rodents invade. Waiting until an infestation occurs means higher costs and damage. Proactively sealing entry points protects clients and preserves reputations. Stay ahead — exclusion is always cheaper and easier than remediation!

2

Exclusion Reduces the Need for Pesticides:

By physically blocking pests, exclusion minimizes chemical treatments. This approach supports Integrated Pest Management (IPM) strategies, making services more sustainable and eco-friendly.

3

Rodents Can Squeeze Through Tiny Gaps:

Mice can fit through 1/4-inch holes and rats can squeeze through 1/2-inch openings. Identifying and sealing these gaps with durable and proven materials is crucial to keeping rodents out.

4

Not All Sealants Work for Exclusion:

Caulks and foam don't withstand gnawing or weather exposure. Only use proven rodent-proof materials like Xcluder® Fill Fabric. It combines stainless steel and poly fibers to create a long-lasting, pest-proof seal.

5

Doors, Garage Doors & Loading Docks Are Key Entry Points:

Gaps under doors, garage doors and around loading docks allow pests in. Installing rodent-proof door sweeps, garage door seals and dock door seals effectively block access. Your customers will appreciate knowing that Xcluder®



Rodent-Proof Door Sweeps are **GUARANTEED** to keep rats and mice out.

6

Vents and Chimneys Need Protective Covers:

Open vents and chimneys invite pests inside. Stainless steel mesh, vent covers and chimney caps maintain airflow while keeping rodents, birds and insects out.

7

Attics, Crawl Spaces & Landscaping Are Often Overlooked:

Pests frequently enter through hidden areas like attic vents and crawl spaces. Regular inspections and proper screening of these spaces can prevent infestations. Overgrown vegetation, tree branches touching buildings and excessive mulch near foundations can create pest-friendly environments. Educating customers on these risks is essential.

8

Customer Education Improves Success:

Helping customers understand the importance

of exclusion encourages them to maintain their property properly. Providing customers with guidance related to landscaping, sanitation and structural repairs can reduce future infestations.

9

Monitoring is Critical:

Exclusion is a key part of all successful pest management programs, and it requires ongoing vigilance. Monitoring using standard methods guides the pest management inspection, and routine checks ensure exclusion materials remain uncompromised.

10

Exclusion Saves Time, Money & Reputations:

While exclusion requires an initial investment and regular inspections and upkeep, it prevents costly call backs and repeated treatments. Prioritizing high-quality exclusion techniques delivers long-lasting results while reducing reliance on chemicals — benefiting customers and your business reputation.

Pest Exclusion Starts Here



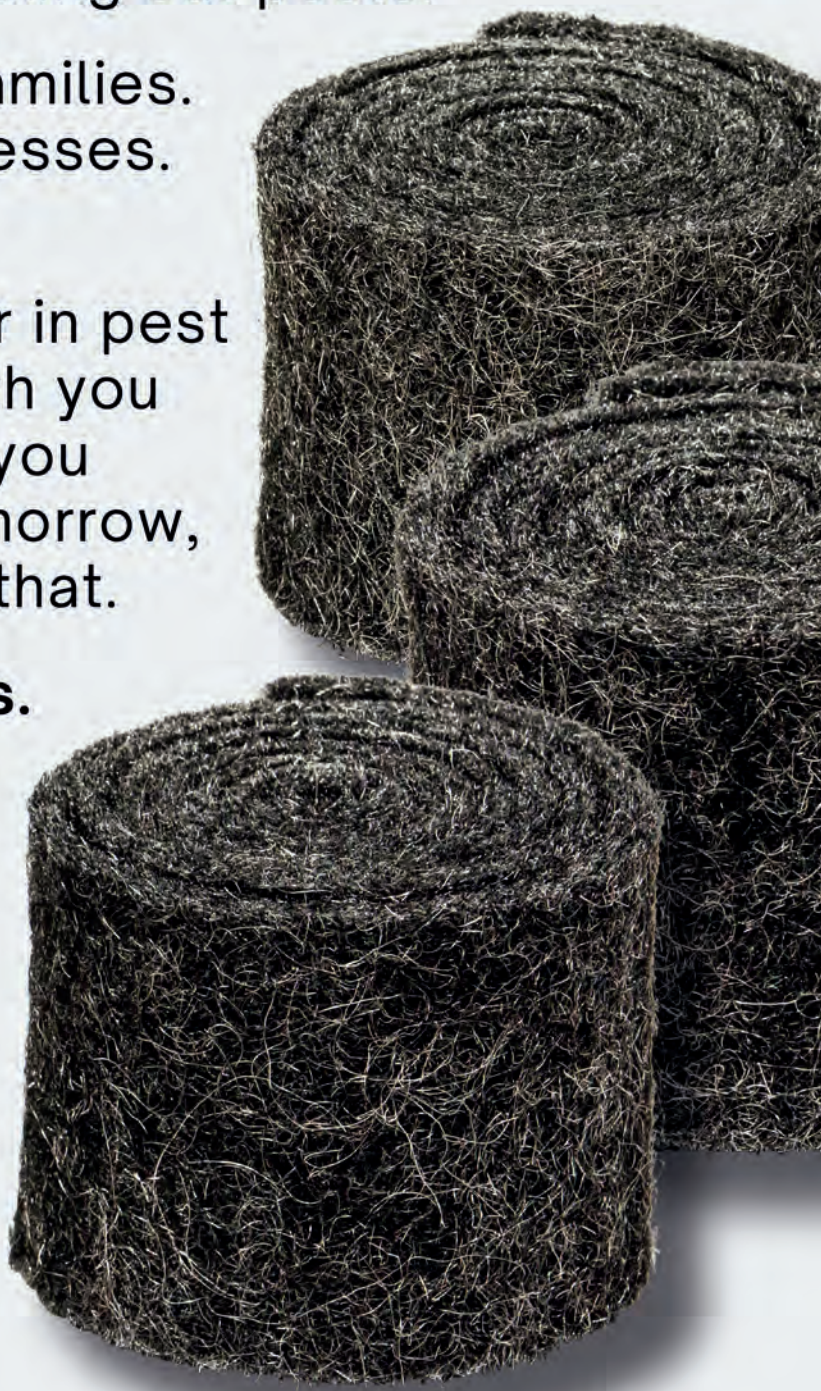
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WorkWave CEO Kevin Kemmerer speaking at the WorkWave 2025 Beyond Service User Conference.

about the latest artificial intelligence (AI) and data-driven technology.

WorkWave CEO Kevin Kemmerer said during his keynote speech that the company continues to invest heavily in its four core markets: pest control, lawn and landscaping, commercial cleaning and security management.

"We're on the next wave of massive disruption with technology data and AI, and

we're in a great place to bring in that next generation and apply technology to solve business problems," Kemmerer said.

Visit bit.ly/4haDcIn for additional coverage of this event. —Amanda Joerndt

NEPMA PestVets Unit Collects Food and Clothing Items for Veterans

MANCHESTER, N.H. — The New England Pest Management Association's (NEPMA) PestVets Unit shared the success of its most recent community outreach initiatives supporting Liberty House, a Manchester, N.H.-based organization dedicated to empowering homeless and struggling veterans.

As part of NEPMA's annual Spring Training event, PestVets organized a canned food drive, encouraging attendees to bring non-perishable food items and gift cards to benefit Liberty House. Thanks to the generosity of industry professionals

from across the region, several hundred food items were collected, along with \$435 in gift cards and cash donations.

This initiative complements New England PestVets' fall clothing and snack drive, held last October through mid-December. That drive saw the collection of hundreds of essential items including socks, t-shirts, underwear and snacks, all of which were delivered directly to Liberty House to support the needs of veterans in their care.



NEPMA members at the association's fall food drive.

AMANDA JOERNDT: NEPMA

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Liberty House provides substance-free housing and vital community connections to veterans facing challenges such as homelessness, substance misuse, PTSD and unemployment.

Hands United Foundation Supports PMPs in Hardship

LAWRENCEVILLE, Ga. — After seeing a gap of resources available to individuals in the pest control industry who experience tragedy and face financial hardships, several PMPs rallied together to start the Hands United Foundation.

The foundation aims to provide financial assistance to either members of, or family members of, those that serve within the pest management industry.

The founders of this organization — Kim Kelley-Tunis, Nisus; Van Wagner, Arrow Exterminators; and Wally Holden, Rentokil Terminix — identified this need after experiencing their own challenges

and recognizing that there were few resources available in the pest management industry to help those in a time of need.

Wagner, current president of the foundation, said the pest management industry is a unique group of people that work together to protect their people and communities they work and live in. “Regardless of the name or brand of the organizations that we all work for, we have always felt the need to support each other,” he said. “We feel that as part of the pest management industry, it is our responsibility to give back to an industry that has benefited us for several years.”

Over the past five years, the foundation has been able to support several industry members financially, Wagner said.



Van Wagner, president of Hands United Foundation.

“A single mother with cancer was out of work for several months with little to no relevant income, but the bills continued to come in. She is now a cancer survivor and during her time of struggle we provided financial support. An industry member passed away unexpectedly and left his young wife and children with financial setbacks,” he said. “We were able to support the family of a young girl that was fighting cancer.”

Wagner said although growing the foundation has come with challenges, a number of pest control companies have provided generous donations since its inception. With the support of organizations like the Georgia Pest Control Association (GPCA) and the Certified Pest Control Operators of Georgia, the foundation has been able to slowly increase the level of funds available to all those that apply for financial assistance.

To learn more visit <https://handsunited.us>. — Amanda Joerndt



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M&A News

Please send press releases about your firm to bharbison@gje.net.



Peter Oleynik, EcoGuard (left) and Chase Goodeill, CEO of Pest Control Consultants (right).

Pest Control Consultants announced its acquisition of **EcoGuard Pest Control**. This acquisition merges two privately-owned pest control companies and expands Pest Control Consultants' service capabilities in Chicago's northwest suburbs.

Located in Glen Ellyn, Ill., EcoGuard is a provider of residential pest control services. "EcoGuard represents a valuable addition to our growing presence in the greater Chicago area," said Chase Goodeill, CEO of Pest Control Consultants.

go area," said Chase Goodeill, CEO of Pest Control Consultants. "We look forward to continuing to earn the loyalty of the EcoGuard customers by providing a first-in-class customer experience. This will also enable us to create more opportunities for team members."

PCO Bookkeepers served as the financial adviser to Pest Control Consultants.

PestCo

Thompson Street Capital Partners (TSCP), a private equity firm based in St. Louis, announced the acquisition of the assets of **Garella Pest Services** by **PestCo Holdings**, a national provider of pest control services to residential and commercial customers and a TSCP portfolio company.

Located in Staunton, Ill., Garella is a provider of residential and commercial pest control services.

"Garella represents a valuable addition to our growing presence in the greater St. Louis area," said Jay Keating, CEO of PestCo. "We look forward to continuing to earn the loyalty of

Garella's customers by providing a superior customer experience."

Craig Garella, owner of Garella, said, "We are beyond excited to partner with PestCo and TSCP to continue providing that same level of commitment to our employees and clients."

Greenix Pest Control acquired **Spidexx Pest Control**, Milwaukee, Wis., and **Proactive Pest Solutions**, Chicago.

With the addition of Spidexx, Greenix now operates in 19 states, serving more than 200,000 households across the Midwest, East Coast and in Utah, where it is headquartered.

The owners of Spidexx, Coleman Spaulding, Taylor Spaulding and Ryan Coleman, said in a press release this move represents a strategic step forward for the company, allowing the leaders to focus on its core markets.

Ryan Coleman, owner, Proactive Pest Solutions, said the sale "reflects our confidence in Greenix's ability to carry forward our mission of delivering exceptional pest management services to the Chicagoland community."

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TOP 10 THINGS TO KNOW

Pest management professionals are constantly exploring options to better satisfy customer demands. To that end, one pesticide category that has gained traction is FIFRA 25(b) exempt products. These are often marketed as safer, environmentally friendly alternatives. But what do you really need to know about them? Here are some key points to consider:

1 What Are 25(b) Products? Under the Federal Insecticide, Fungicide, and Rodenticide Act (FIFRA), Section 25(b) products are classified as minimum-risk pesticides. They are exempt from federal registration if they meet all conditions set by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). These products can be deployed to the field more rapidly since they skip the federal registration step.

2 Ingredients Matter: One of the requirements of 25(b) products is they can ONLY be formulated with active and inert ingredients that are on the EPA's approved list. Active ingredients, including essential oils like peppermint, clove and thyme, as well as inert ingredients including water, isopropyl myristate and mineral oil, are some of the ingredients allowed in these products.

3 Training is Essential: Ensure technicians understand proper application techniques, target pest

behavior and product limitations to maximize success. Additionally, regulations around 25(b) products can vary dramatically from state to state. Stay up to date and informed by regularly checking with your state's lead regulatory agency.

4 Minimum Risk is Not Risk-Free: While they are considered minimum-risk, improper use of 25(b) products can still cause hazards. Avoid spills and applications inconsistent with labeling to avoid negative environmental impact. Improper handling can also lead to irritation or allergic reactions to applicators. Wearing required personal protective equipment (PPE) and ensuring label compliance are still important, even with minimum-risk pesticides.

5 Residues: Many 25(b) products are heavily essential oil-based, so applications made above the recommended label rates can leave oily or greasy residues on surfaces that can be unsightly. Heavy applications might damage surfaces or plants. Communicate with customers about the potential for residues and advise on proper cleanup procedures if necessary.

6 Odor: Some 25(b) ingredients have strong or unpleasant odors. Essential oils like clove, garlic or peppermint can be perceived as unpleasant or be overwhelming in small spaces. Test in small areas before large-scale applications, especially indoors and in areas where people sensitive to odors live.

7 Storage, Shelf-life and Application Equipment: Essential oil-based products may degrade or separate faster than conventional products. Contact the

manufacturer of the products in your inventory about expiration or when to discard products. Standard spray equipment is usually fine for application of 25(b) products, but some oils and inert ingredients can be harsh on hoses, seals and gaskets. It is best to confirm compatibility to avoid equipment issues.

8 Integrated Pest Management (IPM) Compatibility: When used alongside IPM tactics, 25(b) products can be a valuable part of a holistic approach in a comprehensive program. They can be especially useful as part of a rotational program to delay insecticide resistance, ultimately reducing reliance on synthetic pesticides.

9 Cost Considerations: Essential oil-based products are often more expensive per application than traditional synthetic pesticides. This is due to the sourcing of quality oils and other plant-based co-formulants. Factor this into your pricing and service structure.

10 How do I know which 25(b) product is the best for my needs? When it comes to 25(b) products, versatility and support make all the difference. Introducing Vector Kleer — a powerful solution for controlling mosquitoes, ticks, flies and fleas across residential, commercial and recreational areas. Its broad coverage and flexible application ensure you get effective results where they matter most. With 25(b) products exempt from federal registration, the market is flooded with options — but not all are created equal. Choosing a trusted manufacturer like Control Solutions Inc. (CSI) means you get more than just a product; you get proven performance and expert support.

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Contact your local distributor or CSI representative for more information. This product may not be registered in all states, please check the CSI website or the state's department of agriculture for registration information.

Third Hantavirus-Related Death Confirmed in Calif.

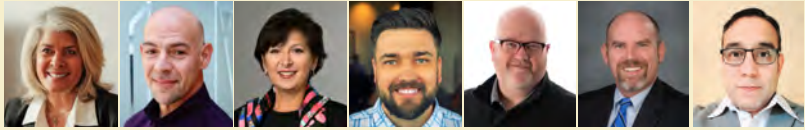
MONO COUNTY, Calif. — Mono County Public Health confirmed in April a third death due to hantavirus in Mammoth Lakes, Calif.

In a press release, Dr. Tom Boo, the county's public health officer, expressed concern over the rising number of cases, emphasizing the unusual occurrence of multiple deaths in such a short time frame, particularly so early in the year.

"A third case of hantavirus pulmonary syndrome, each of which has been fatal, is tragic and alarming," Boo said. "We don't have a clear sense of where this young adult may have contracted the virus. The home had no evidence of mouse activity, and while we observed some mice in the workplace, this is not unusual for indoor spaces during this time of year in Mammoth Lakes." — Source: Mono County Health **PCT**

Comings & Goings

If your company has added new personnel, send a photo and press release to bharrison@gie.net.



Hancock Bellet Chandler Shelton Lamson Helsby Diaz

Andrea Hancock was named CEO of Mattress Safe, taking the helm after serving as vice president. She succeeds her father, **Will Poston**, who had led the company the past two decades.

Aruza Pest Control announced the appointment of **Justin Bellet** as chief operating officer (COO). Bellet brings more than two decades of experience in the pest control industry, having previously served as COO at Truly Nolen of America, where he oversaw operations.

Rollins has promoted **Beth Chandler**, a 12-year Rollins employee, to chief legal officer. She retains her role as general counsel and corporate secretary.

OhDeer announced that **Jerome Shelton** joined as vice president of franchise development and **Todd Lamson** as senior director of operations.

Massey Services announced the promotion of **Blaine Helsby** to senior director of accounting and reporting, and **Melissa Meyer** to senior director of human resources.

Newly rebranded Pest Hunters-Mosquito Hunters announced **Miguel Diaz** as its director of operations. Diaz has more than 20 years of experience at Orkin.

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ALSO INSIDE!

**Top 100
Poster**

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Ken Bradley

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To those who made this year's PCT Top 100 — congratulations! Your commitment to excellence continues to elevate the industry. And to those striving to make the list in the future or just starting their journey, know that Veseris is here to support you at every step.

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Ken Bradley, CEO, Veseris

U.S. Structural Pest Control Market Nears \$13 Billion

The commercial segment continued to expand in 2024 despite a dip in consumer confidence and heightened inflation, new report shows.

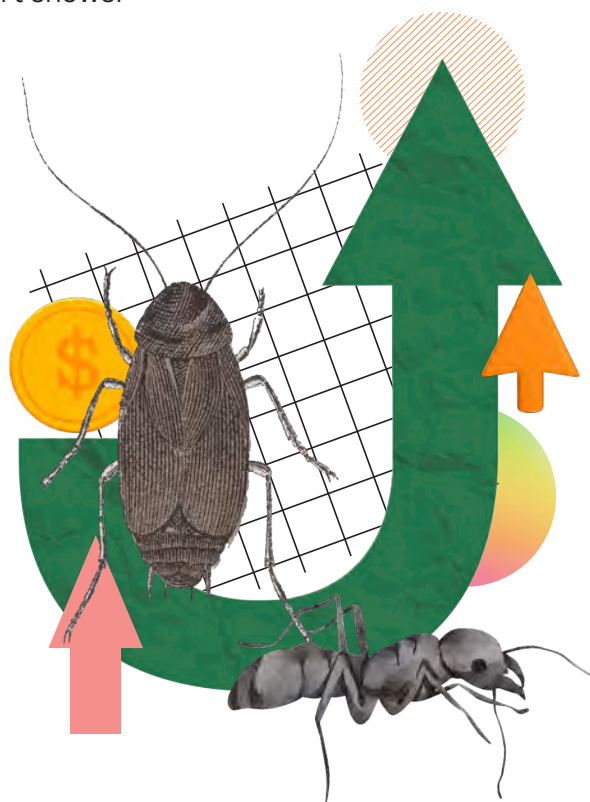
The United States structural pest control industry generated total service revenue of \$12.654 billion, a 7.9% increase from the \$11.723 billion measured in 2023, according to the 25th edition of “A Strategic Analysis of the U.S. Structural Pest Control Industry” from Specialty Consultants, LLC. There were more than 17,000 pest control firms operating in the U.S. this past year, two-thirds of which operated from a single location. “While consumer confidence is sagging and inflation is a bit hotter than many anticipated, we remain bullish on the resilience of the pest control industry,” said Rich Kalik, partner. “For 2025, we believe the industry will expand slightly more than 6%.”

Once again, the service revenue derived from controlling cockroaches edged out the revenue from controlling nuisance ants. “Interestingly, the largest revenue increase came from controlling carpenter ants, which increased 13.8% this past year,” said Kalik. “Revenue generated from controlling bed bugs increased 5.9%, following a 10.6% increase the prior year.”

More than 13.25 million residential customers received a professional pest control service this past year. Recurring revenue accounted for 85.2% of the residential pest control service revenue generated, down slightly from 85.9% measured in 2023. The commercial segment continued to expand with a 9% increase in service revenue generated this past year.

On the supply side, expenditures for insecticides, rodenticides and termite control products exceeded \$1 billion for the first time. This was an increase of 8.9% over last year and equates to an industry M&S (materials and supplies) of 8.2%.

The 2024 season market report is the 25th edition of “A



Strategic Analysis of the U.S. Structural Pest Control Industry.” A total of 800 owners or managers of pest control companies were surveyed for this study. Nearly half of the respondents to this year’s survey were members of the National Pest Management Association and nearly two-thirds were members of their state or local association. The syndicated market report is available for purchase only by subscription, sold in its entirety.

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TOP 100

**2025
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ABOUT THIS LIST

- The PCT Top 100 is a list of the industry's largest firms by revenues, based on 2024 North America commercial services revenues. Firms submitted revenues online or via a form in the January issue of PCT.
- The abbreviations on the list are as follows:
 - ** = estimated figure n/a = no answer/unknown
 - GPC = general pest control
 - TC = termite control
 - RES = residential QJM = commercial EMP = employees
- In the "other" category, services may include structural fumigation, construction services, nuisance wildlife control, irrigation repair and

maintenance, insulation, bird control, pool services, lawn care, lawn maintenance, snow removal, tree care, weed control, heating and air conditioning services, gutter work, handyman services and more.

Companies on the list earned total revenues of \$127,170,791 in 2024.

There are 31 states and two Canadian provinces represented. Texas has 12 companies on the list. Florida and California both have nine.

There are 10 companies in this year's list that were not on last year's list: Next Home, Fairfield, N.J., Ariza Pest Control, Charlotte, N.C., Select Environmental, Franklin Square, N.Y., Liberman, Nashville, Tenn., American Drawspace & Pest Ser-

vices, Lynnwood, Wash., EnviroSmart Multifamily Pest Solutions, Houston, Texas, LaBonte's Pest Control, Tibbodaux, La., Fowler and Sons, Hyannis, Mass., Environmental Pest Management, Columbus, Ohio, and NaturZone Pest Control, Sarasota, Fla.

The Senke Family of Companies was previously located in Kennewick, Wash. As of this spring, the company's new headquarters is in Dallas.

For various reasons, several firms that were on last year's list declined to submit revenue figures for this year's list, so they are not included.

PCT estimated the revenues for several companies on the list. PCT staff interviewed state association executives, industry consultants and

others, so well as reviewed previously published figures, to arrive at these estimates.

- PCT vets companies' Top 100 entries throughout the year and reserves the right to publish any information it deems may be inaccurate.
- When companies submit information with qualifications such as "more than," PCT rounds to the nearest whole number since there is no way to discern the correct figure with the data provided.
- Visit PCT magazine's interactive map at bit.ly/4d4z6ze to see company information and view links to each of the Top 100 firms' websites.
- Email PCT Senior News Editor Brad Harrison at bharrison@pct.net with questions about this list.

CONGRATULATIONS PCT TOP 100														
VESERIS														
2024 RANK	COMPANY	2023 RANK	CITY	STATE/ PROVINCE	2024 REVENUES	INSECT PESTS (2023)	INSECT PESTS FOR 2023	GPC	TC	OTHER	RES	COM	# EMP	# OFFICES
1	Renicki Termite	1	Reading	PA	\$3,465,000,000	3%	3%	70%	20%	10%	65%	35%	17,500	600
2	Retires	2	Atlanta	GA	\$3,388,708,000	10%	n/a	75%	21%	0%	67%	33%	20,000	800
3	Enogh	3	St. Paul	MI	\$855,800,000	10%	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
4	Anticlimax North America	4	Basking Ridge	NJ	\$605,000,000	8%	n/a	75%	15%	10%	75%	25%	3,900	100
5	Apive Environmental	5	Provo	UT	\$508,978,066	13%	7%	100%	0%	0%	100%	0%	4,558	74
6	Armos Environmental	6	Atlanta	GA	\$480,425,000	7%	5%	51%	36%	13%	44%	11%	1,625	185
7	Macey Services	7	Orlando	FL	\$333,139,891	3%	15%	45%	25%	20%	50%	5%	288	150
8	Maise Pest Control	8	Irvine	TX	\$287,192,320	22%	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	91%	9%	n/a	44
9	Cook's Pest Control	9	Decatur	AL	\$210,000,000	5%	5%	60%	40%	0%	75%	25%	1,725	42
10	Senke Family of Companies	13	Dallas	TX	\$178,512,000	36%	3%	15%	0%	84%	89%	11%	1,038	53
11	Temilia Service	10	Cumtuh	TX	\$168,936,500	2%	0%	45%	45%	10%	90%	10%	1,052	56
12	ABC Home & Commercial Services	11	Austin	TX	\$158,000,000	5%	9%	37%	2%	61%	80%	20%	1,100	7
13	Greenix Pest Control	14	Orem	UT	\$148,858,958	24%	12%	43%	0%	57%	100%	0%	1,200	62
14	Pesico	15	St. Louis	MO	\$145,000,000	27%	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	75%	25%	870	42
15	Next Home	n/a	Fairfield	NJ	\$140,000,000	n/a	n/a	21%	6%	73%	42%	58%	1,281	26
16	Truly North America	12	Tucson	AZ	\$138,130,764	5%	6%	70%	20%	10%	75%	25%	1,100	80
17	Alati Pest Control	16	Indianapolis	IN	\$121,000,000**	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
18	Plunkett's Pest Control	17	Friday	MI	\$115,000,000	13%	6%	90%	0%	10%	30%	70%	760	2
19	Carfax Pest	20	Tampa	FL	\$81,000,000	16%	23%	81%	5%	14%	75%	25%	569	22
20	Dobson Pest Control	19	Lynchburg	VA	\$77,400,000	6%	3%	73%	27%	0%	60%	40%	670	38
21	Extrema Brands	22	Charleston	SC	\$70,000,000	n/a	n/a	57%	35%	8%	95%	5%	400	21
22	Solo	23	Orem	UT	\$64,838,000	5%	0%	95%	1%	0%	95%	5%	288	18
23	Sprague Pest Solutions	24	Tacoma	WA	\$55,000,000	15%	12%	100%	0%	0%	100%	0%	131	22
24	Green Pest Solutions	26	West Chester	PA	\$50,848,633	17%	22%	38%	1%	83%	93%	7%	325	6
25	Lloyd Pest Control	25	San Diego	CA	\$49,300,000	9%	9%	80%	20%	0%	80%	40%	330	10
26	Alta Pest Control	30	Round Rock	TX	\$45,800,000	7%	41%	30%	73%	4%	21%	100%	426	18
27	Rose Pest Solutions	27	Troy	MI	\$45,235,000**	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
28	Rettler Pest Solutions	29	St. Louis	MO	\$42,500,000	11%	10%	100%	0%	0%	84%	28%	288	11
29	Brooks Pest Control	51	Orem	UT	\$41,144,954	122%	2%	100%	0%	0%	100%	0%	283	9
30	Acus Pest Control	n/a	Charlotte	NC	\$41,170,000	117%	0%	100%	0%	0%	100%	0%	n/a	11
31	Advanced Integrated Pest Management	31	Roseville	CA	\$38,477,466	11%	10%	9%	5%	5%	35%	65%	217	11
32	ABC Home & Commercial Services	33	Orlando	TX	\$37,468,136	14%	15%	78%	5%	17%	60%	40%	n/a	5
33	Huett Environmental Services	32	West Palm Beach	FL	\$35,300,000	5%	5%	n/a	n/a	n/a	85%	15%	n/a	3
34	Select Environmental	34	Orlando	TX	\$35,000,000	n/a	n/a	99%	1%	0%	2%	98%	225	4
35	Mahes & Mahes	35	Orlando	TX	\$32,630,440	11%	5%	94%	0%	0%	10%	90%	173	9
36	ABC Home & Commercial Services of PA	34	Lewisville	TX	\$31,624,188	2%	15%	74%	5%	21%	75%	25%	n/a	3
37	Cherry's Termite & Pest	37	Durham	NC	\$30,000,000	8%	8%	55%	45%	0%	75%	25%	300	13
38	Liberman	38	Nashville	TN	\$29,800,000	29%	41%	85%	8%	7%	100%	0%	170	15
39	Romex Pest Control	44	Plano	TX	\$28,782,382	32%	15%	98%	4%	0%	98%	2%	182	6
40	Go-Forth Pest Control	38	High Point	NC	\$28,455,386	20%	25%	75%	25%	0%	90%	10%	177	17
41	Peck-Cox Termite	39	Orange	CA	\$27,332,127	1%	5%	7%	78%	15%	90%	10%	150	2
42	Knox Pest Control	38	Columbus	GA	\$26,655,363	4%	9%	55%	42%	3%	45%	55%	220	20
43	Servall Termite & Pest Control	40	Clarksville	TN	\$25,519,570	6%	8%	40%	35%	2%	75%	25%	230	7
44	Black Diamond Pest Control	42	Jacksonville	IN	\$25,312,823	7%	12%	60%	25%	15%	70%	30%	187	13
45	Quality Pest Services	53	Indianapolis	CA	\$25,219,491	42%	32%	0%	65%	35%	70%	30%	210	10
46	Evergreen Pest Solutions	50	Ogden	UT	\$24,958,150	24%	15%	91%	8%	1%	98%	2%	159	6
47	Braman Termite & Pest Elimination	43	Agawam	MA	\$24,100,000	7%	8%	95%	5%	0%	10%	90%	216	7
48	Breda Pest Management	46	Laguna Hills	CA	\$23,437,000	18%	10%	65%	40%	0%	65%	35%	185	4
49	The Pest Group	41	Pompano Beach	FL	\$23,000,000	n/a	n/a	95%	0%	0%	95%	5%	110	9
50	Frontline Pest	55	Orem	UT	\$22,940,930	38%	12%	71%	12%	100%	0%	135	6	
51	Alti U Need Pest Control	63	Fort Myers	FL	\$22,010,000	64%	40%	55%	8%	0%	90%	10%	154	10
52	Pro-Master	45	Reese	IN	\$21,740,000	4%	11%	75%	5%	20%	25%	75%	195	47
53	Versarx Enterprises	52	San Diego	TX	\$21,600,000	17%	15%	98%	2%	0%	100%	0%	142	7
54	Adams Pest Control	46	Midvale	UT	\$21,000,000	9%	10%	90%	1%	3%	60%	40%	150	2
55	Inlight Pest Solutions WA	48	Federal Way	WA	\$21,000,000	6%	6%	90%	0%	10%	95%	5%	n/a	13
56	Liberty Pest Control	54	Brooklyn	NY	\$19,015,916	8%	15%	100%	0%	0%	5%	95%	104	1
57	Leads Pest Control	56	Tomball	TX	\$18,770,000	n/a	8%	32%	42%	6%	65%	35%	n/a	n/a
58	Mermaid Pest Control	61	Albany	NY	\$17,500,000	30%	15%	99%	1%	0%	95%	5%	97	4
59	MosquitoX	57	Austin	TX	\$16,829,863	8%	0%	5%	0%	95%	95%	5%	110	10
60	Economy Exterminators	60	Ajoia	NC	\$15,559,000	8%	9%	70%	12%	11%	60%	30%	160	3
61	West Termite Pest & Lawn	59	Lowell	AR	\$15,184,959	4%	10%	41%	32%	22%	70%	30%	114	9
62	Hoffman's Exterminating	65	Mantua	NJ	\$14,700,000	9%	12%	85%	10%	5%	48%	52%	89	6
63	Fast Action Pest Control	69	Elk Grove	CA	\$14,537,310	20%	20%	80%	15%	5%	90%	10%	110	2
64	Chips	64	Atlanta	GA	\$14,500,000	5%	7%	n/a	n/a	n/a	90%	10%	110	6
65	Native Pest Management	68	Tallahassee	FL	\$13,728,795	10%	15%	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	80	5
66	Big Blue Bug Solutions	72	Providence	RI	\$13,000,000	11%	11%	90%	5%	5%	60%	40%	97	5
67	Cabany Pest Control	71	Latham	NY	\$13,000,000	10%	15%	100%	0%	0%	80%	20%	70	4
68	Nuon-Nuon	66	West Palm Beach	FL	\$13,013,123	3%	3%	65%	15%	20%	80%	20%	141	1
69	All-American Pest Control	70	Nashville	TN	\$13,300,000	7%	n/a	63%	37%	0%	9%	91%	n/a	4
70	Pest-End	80	Plattsburgh	NH	\$12,520,722	23%	20%	65%	5%	10%	65%	35%	90	2
71	Nelson-Cole Termite & Pest Control	74	Shelby	NC	\$12,281,000	7%	10%	15%	15%	70%	60%	20%	100	3
72	The Bugman	73	Annapolis	CA	\$12,280,000	4%	8%	32%	42%	0%	60%	40%	74	1
73	Senke Termite and Pest Control	76	Galveston	MD	\$12,078,970	8%	14%	70%	24%	0%	98%	2%	58	3
74	Bug-N-A-Rug Exterminators	80	Atlanta	NY	\$11,981,851	14%	18%	40%	40%	20%	90%	10%	99	5
75	Schneider's Pest Control	67	Channahon	IL	\$11,466,554	2%	7%	80%	20%	0%	75%	25%	96	3
76	OK Exterminators	75	Laurens	LA	\$11,295,000	4%	8%	40%	60%	0%	65%	35%	60	3
77	Swat Pest Management	78	Evansville	IN	\$11,259,668	5%	2%	37%	5%	58%	70%	30%	56	2
78	American Drawspace & Pest Services	n/a	Lynnwood	WA	\$10,878,000	20%	25%	25%	0%	75%	80%	20%	51	1
79	EnviroSmart Multifamily Pest Solutions	n/a	Houston	TX	\$10,700,000	22%	20%	85%	15%	0%	100%	0%	85	3
80	Conway's Service	79	Lumbert Bridge	NC	\$10,700,000	n/a	10%	40%	40%	20%	90%	10%	92	6
81	Ecota Termite and Pest Management	87	Mission Hills	CA	\$10,650,993	9%	10%	30%	0%	85%	15%	71	7	
82	Kilgus Pest Control	93	Kailua	HI	\$10,588,637	21%	50%	60%	40%	0%	70%	30%	88	1
83	American Pest Control	82	Harris City	IL	\$10,516,800	7%	7%	87%	12%	1%	52%	48%	73	2
84	Innovative Pest Solutions	96	Yolo	CA	\$10,265,960	20%	20%	68%	3%	29%	1%	99%	60	2
85	Accel Pest & Termite Control	98	Virginia Beach	VA	\$9,911,001	20%	18%	65%	10%	25%	94%	6%	70	4
86	The Bug Master	88	Austin	TX	\$9,900,000	3%	7%	75%	10%	15%	40%	60%	80	3
87	Arms Pest Control	94	Shawnee	ID	\$9,887,316	14%	15%	85%	5%	0%	90%	1%	95	7
88	Southern and Sovereign Pest Control	83	Virginia Beach	VA	\$9,700,000	-1%	-1%	60%	35%	5%	100%	0%	70	11
89	Animal Pest Management	91	Chino	CA	\$9,550,000	12%	15%	2%	11%	87%	10%	90%	65	4
90	Lakeland's Pest Control	n/a	Tibbodaux	LA	\$9,500,000	38%	20%	55%	25%	0%	88%	12%	85	4
91	National Exterminating	95	Newport News	VA	\$9,347,710	10%	10%	60%	n/a	n/a	8%	40%	55	1
92	Horizon Pest Control	85	Midland Park	NJ	\$9,140,000	-6%	-6%	50%	5%	5%	65%	35%	69	1
93	Fowler and Sons	n/a	Hyannis	MA	\$9,100,000	11%	15%	84%	5%	11%	90%	10%	60	1
94	Arthen Pest Control	67	Elgin	GA	\$8,865,886	25%	20%	70%	30%	0%	90%	10%	40	2
95	No More Bugs	92	San Jose	CA	\$8,557,121	5%	8%	22%	2%	78%	97%	3%	60	11
96	All Natural Pest Elimination	90	Madison	OR	\$8,800,000	-9%	10%	50%	40%	10%	90%	10%	65	2
97	BAD Exterminators	92	Jacksonville	FL	\$8,700,000	n/a	n/a	40%	40%	20%	70%	30%	50	1
98	EnviroSmart Pest Management	n/a	Columbus	OH	\$8,300,000	16%	15%	90%	10%	0%	20%	80%	79	1
99	Arthen Pest Control	91	Orton	TX	\$8,200,000	11%	10%	80%	10%	0%	90%	10%	50	2
100	NatZone Pest Control	n/a	Sarasota	FL	\$8,177,659	11%	10%	82%	18%	4%	4%	96%	57	1

Hit or Miss?

These Top 100 companies forecasted lots of growth last year. PCT followed up to see how close their predictions were to actual revenue gains.



Editor's note: Every year while compiling the Top 100, PCT is struck by PCOs' ambitious growth plans for the following year, including double-digit growth and record-breaking revenues. The proverbial light bulb lit up: What if we followed up a year later to see which companies delivered on their bold projections? On the following two pages, PCT checked in with Top 100 firms to see if their predictions came to fruition, as well as their advice for fellow PMPs.

By Ed DeMask



KYLE SELBACH, DIRECTOR OF OPERATIONS
All U Need Pest Control / Fort Myers, Fla.

Predicted Growth 60%; Actual 64%
Key Growth Tactics: Door-to-door, digital marketing

On Growth: "Door-to-door has an instant effect — it's going to happen, and then you can refine routes closer together, so you build that density. Your marketing side also cohesively then takes time to do...what it takes to boost SEO rankings in the right areas."

Tips: "I would set out your target audience, have it well-defined and accomplish your goals. There are so many different avenues you can go down in the pest space and we can refine it so it's easy to capture that market. You are going to start slow, but you have to build up your book of business while growing [and] also focus on your services."



DAVE BRADFORD, CEO
Certus Pest / Tampa, Fla.

Predicted Growth 15%; Actual 16%
Key Growth Tactics: Digital marketing, M&A

On Growth: "At the end of the day, it's a people business. [I have] really strong people on my team — getting the right mindset has taken a couple of years to do. I'd say I have the best team in the industry. That's why we have the momentum."

Tips: "Make sure you have the right people to drive the right initiatives. Once you have the right systems and processes then you can expand with speed and volume."



ERIC CAMPBELL, CEO
Brooks Pest Control / California, Washington, Oregon

Predicted Growth 150%; Actual 123%
Key Growth Tactics: Inside sales, marketing, door-to-door

On Growth: "I would credit our growth to a very talented executive team, and motivated employees that have bought into the culture of growth and expansion"

Future: "We plan to grow 20% to 25% in 2025."

ADAM CARACE, CEO
Pest-End / Plaistow, N.H.

Predicted Growth 24%; Actual 23%
Key Growth Tactics: Strategic sales, ability to shift on demand



On Growth: “We’ll shift and go heavy in an area when we need to — we’ll change the SEOs and budgets very quickly based on what

is working. If wildlife is picking up in an area, we’re very much in tune and change strategies on the fly. We’re capturing the best customer base for that time period.”

Tips: “[You] have to put ego aside and do whatever systems and procedures that will allow you to scale; that’s the most important thing you can do.”

JIM CARNELLI, VICE PRESIDENT OF PEST CONTROL
Green Pest Solutions / West Chester, Pa.



Predicted Growth 21%; Actual 17%
Key Growth Tactics: Culture and recurring sales



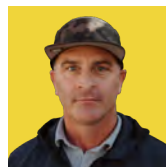
On Growth: “Our relentless focus on prioritizing our people and reinvesting in them was the driving force behind our success in 2024.”

Future: “In 2025, we are targeting 22% growth, driven by continued investment in our people, expanding our recurring revenue programs and enhancing our digital marketing and sales strategy.”



BYRON GIFFORD, CO-OWNER/CEO
Evergreen Pest Solutions / Ogden, Utah

Predicted Growth 33%; Actual 24%
Key Growth Tactics: Referrals, partnerships



On Growth: “We hit our target through a combination of successful

referral programs, exciting new service bundles with add-on opportunities and creating new partnerships in the industry to stretch beyond our typical reach.”

Future: “2025 is going to be a record-breaking year for our teams. We are aiming for incredible growth in the next 12 months, which will more than double the size of our current customer base. We are revving up for an all-hands-on-deck full surge ahead.”



LEE WHITMORE
Quality Pest Services / Anaheim, Calif.

Predicted Growth 38%; Actual 42%
Key Growth Tactics: Partnerships, relationships



On Growth: “We have to earn our keep every day. One customer can be millions of dollars of business, so we work hard to cultivate the best relationships possible. We work hard with the top companies in the state.”

Tips: “Know your brand and stay focused and pay attention to your [numbers] inside and out and where you need to be at with KPI.” ▀





PMPs Shoot for the Moon

Companies strived for, met or exceeded revenue growth goals in various ways last year. **By Ed DeMask**

Every year companies make the PCT Top 100, leaving a lasting mark on the pest control industry. Growth is not a given in any market and not every firm chooses to pursue it in the same ways. From mergers and acquisitions to expanding into new states/regions to enhanced and aggressive digital marketing campaigns, there are many ways companies boost their revenues.

In 2024, many of the firms that projected double-digit growth were able to meet or exceed those goals using some of those methods plus others—and all proved to be fruitful at revenue generation. Others that didn't meet their targets came very close.

DOOR-TO-DOOR. In the age of digital everything, door hangers and knocking around neighborhoods certainly sounds analog. However, it's anything but.

Kyle Selbach, director of operations for All U Need Pest Control, Fort Myers, Fla., evenly divided the company's growth plan between digital advertising and old-fashioned door knocking.

"We took our growth plan, made it aggressive, and started the door knocking, which was helping gain customers," he said. "We developed it into a strong growth model. We have two full-time door-to-door representatives that work Monday through Friday getting customers."

The company's two employees in that division are full-time with benefits which, he said, helps with quality control from a management standpoint and is much more cohesive to the marketing department. All U Need Pest Control predicted they would have 60% growth in 2024; they ended the year at 64%. Eight years ago, the current owner acquired the company when it had just two employees and \$250,000 in annual revenue. Today, it generates \$31 million a year—and it's still growing.

M&A. Not far from All U Need is Tampa-based Certus Pest. The company's CEO Dave Bradford recounted how it grew 16% in 2024, more than targeted.

"Our mix is 70% residential, 30% com-

mercial and our organic growth was 5% year over year with the remainder of it coming from M&A [mergers and acquisitions]," Bradford said. "From an organic perspective and team perspective, we put together a very specific plan to ensure building density and scale. We have a really good team that executes against goals and targets and that's why we hit our numbers."

Bradford brought in a new head of marketing in 2023 and that, he said, has paid off on the growth side. "His expertise in regard to digital—paid and organic—is one of the best I've seen, and we have a new leader over sales with a true passion for it," he said. "Their partnership has fueled our sales and marketing growth. We are tackling it with technology and digital expertise. It's a combination of age-old practices with technology."

DIGITAL MARKETING. When Adam Carace, his sister and his wife purchased Plaistow, N.H.-based Pest-End from his father at the end of 2020, he had concerns about the large pest control firms growing in many areas nearby. However, the trio and their 96 employees have been growing the company steadily, up 23% in 2024 with a goal of \$15 million in 2025. "We don't do door-to-door, it's all organic and then we look strategically where the good growth markets are and then we [concentrate] our marketing in those areas," Carace said.

Last year, Pest-End purchased a small mosquito company to help expand its growth. Also helping with growth is the company's ability to shift at any time to where the need is most urgent. "We are a team, and a lot of people say that but when your salespeople are all licensed, if you're running light in a certain area, they'll pause and go help there for a full team effort," he said.

CUSTOMER SERVICE. While Brooks Pest Control slightly missed its target for growth, the company saw an increase of 123%. CEO Eric Campbell said the com-

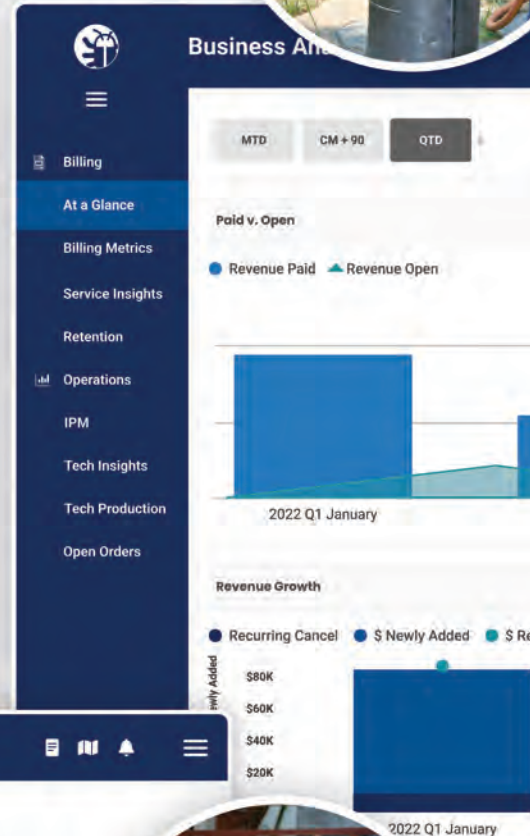
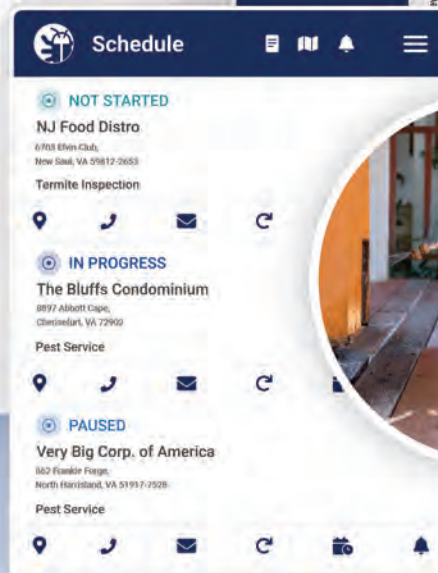


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pany, which operates in California, Washington and Oregon, attributes its growth to a number of initiatives. “Our inside sales and marketing efforts have played a large part in our overall success and enabled us to connect with customers,” he said. “Our world-class door-to-door program also helped us hit our goals.” He also said the growth was based on “the ability to provide quality customer service, and highly skilled door-to-door and inside sales teams.”

REFERRALS. In Southern California, Lee Whitmore’s Anaheim-based Quality Pest Services is known for tackling the toughest fumigation jobs. But unlike some PMPs, the company is a subcontractor for termite firms that want the best available fumigators. “Our model’s a little different, we don’t do [jobs] directly with the con-

sumer public,” Whitmore said. “Our marketing is specific to the prime contractors who would be doing that kind of work.”

In 2024, Whitmore’s company grew 42%. Even so, he said he’s taking nothing for granted. “We’ve got a reputation of doing the hardest jobs and that goes a long way,” he said. “There’s plenty of competition in the space but if it’s really tough and [needs to be] done properly, we have a good reputation [for doing these jobs].”

RECURRING SALES. Jim Carnelli, vice president of West Chester, Pa.-based Green Pest Solutions, said the company attributes its growth to a multi-prong approach to revenue generation. “We placed a heavy emphasis on recurring revenue program sales, ensuring long-term stabil-



To read even more details about Top 100 companies’ growth strategies, visit bit.ly/3JccnWU.

ity and growth,” he said. “By refining our program blend with a good, better, best approach, we empowered customers to choose a service plan that truly fits their needs. This shift not only increased customer retention and lifetime value, but it also led to higher average sales prices as more customers opted into premium-tier programs.”

By focusing on recurring revenue, sharpening sales tactics, increasing digital marketing investment and fostering a strong performance culture, these companies are laying the foundation for sustained success. ▀

The author is a regular contributor to PCT.



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Rentokil at 100: A Legacy of Innovation

Rentokil CEO Andy Ransom reflects on the company's storied past and shares how innovation is leading the company into the future. **By Brad Harbison**

In 2025, Rentokil is marking a milestone that is the rarest of the rare among large, global companies — 100 years in business. Through seismic shifts in the global economy, cultural changes and ever-advancing technology, Rentokil has succeeded by maintaining its customer-centric focus.

"It's an evolving challenge," Rentokil CEO Andy Ransom told PCT. "Technology is increasingly part of our daily lives, and we're making investments in customer experience and service, but at the core of pest control is the human element. This is a people-based industry. While technology, automation and AI are enhancing our business, we still need people to deliver the solutions, especially when things don't go as planned."

Ransom, who has led Rentokil the last 12 years, has seen both the supplier side and service side of pest control. He began his professional career as a transactional lawyer at chemical company Imperial Chemical Industries (ICI), working internationally in places like Canada and the U.S. Over time, he transitioned from legal work to running businesses within ICI. After ICI was acquired in 2007, Ransom and two colleagues joined Rentokil in May 2008. Initially, he led various parts of the business, including the Asia Pacific region, before being named CEO.

"At first, I didn't know much about the industry, but I quickly fell in love with it," he said. "Somebody once described pest control to me as biblical — pests have been with us since the beginning of time

and will be with us until the end of time. Our job is to control them in the meantime. What keeps me here is the people, and there are so many characters in this industry."

HUMBLE BEGINNINGS. While Rentokil's history does not date back to biblical times, 100 years is a long time — especially considering how many changes the world has undergone in the past century.

In 1924, scientist Harold Maxwell-LeFroy was tasked with solving a wood-boring insect problem in Westminster Hall in the Houses of Parliament in London. He developed a chemical solution the company started selling under the Rentokil brand in 1925. The name "Rentokil" combines "entomology" and "kill," reflecting its scientific roots.

"It was about solving customer problems through science and innovation, and that's been at the core of Rentokil's philosophy ever since," said Ransom. "We continue to honor that by focusing on customer problems and using science, technology and innovation to solve them."

GOING GLOBAL. Rentokil expanded globally in the 1960s, first with an international acquisition in Kenya. From there, things moved quickly — the company expanded into 21 countries across Europe,

Australasia, Southeast Asia, the Caribbean and South Africa. The momentum kept going in the 1970s, with Rentokil rolling out a franchising model in 10 countries and making acquisitions in nine more. That decade also marked a big milestone: entering the U.S. market for the first time.

By 2005, Rentokil North America was a \$27 million business, with 16 branches and about 300 employees. With half of the world's pest control market value in the U.S., Rentokil in 2006 made a strategic decision to expand with the acquisition of J.C. Ehrlich, Reading, Pa. — a \$125 million business. The acquisition allowed Rentokil to expand its footprint in North America, and served as a foundation for further growth.

Ransom said Rentokil learned a lot from Ehrlich, particularly in residential and termite control. "Ehrlich had a unique business model that we adopted in parts of our operation, especially around revenue recognition and service agreements," he said. "We also created a global pest board to share best practices across all our regions. We learned a lot from their technology solutions, and we've applied that knowledge across our global business. We also moved people between markets to spread those best practices."

Rentokil did, indeed, use Ehrlich as a springboard for a flurry of acquisitions in North America. Significant acquisitions



Andy Ransom

included Presto-X, Omaha, Neb., a \$30 million business that serviced large swaths of the Midwest and Plains states, and Western Exterminator, a \$149 million business (a sale that also included Western-owned distributor Target Specialty Products).

TERMINIX ACQUISITION. A major milestone in Rentokil's history occurred in October 2022 when Rentokil Initial completed its acquisition of Terminix Global Holdings in an 80% stock and 20% cash (\$1.3 billion) deal. This acquisition allowed Rentokil to overtake Rollins for the No. 1 position on last year's PCT Top 100 — a spot it retains this year. Rentokil recorded 2024 revenues of \$3.465 billion compared to Rollins' yearly revenues \$3.388 billion.

Ransom described the Terminix acquisition as "a huge opportunity" that allowed



Just as it did in 1925, Rentokil remains committed to solving customer problems through science and innovation.

Rentokil to become No. 1 in residential, termite, commercial and national accounts in the U.S. "It wasn't just a takeover — it was a merger of strengths," Ransom said. "Rentokil brought its commercial expertise, while Terminix had a strong position in residential and termite control. The scale and density of Terminix allowed us to grow rapidly, and it's a pivotal moment in Rentokil's journey, especially as we look forward to the future. Terminix will celebrate its 100th anniversary in two years, and this is a business that will con-

tinue to grow for decades to come."

That's not to say the integration has been easy. In September 2024, Rentokil Initial reported slow sales in North America, which caused its share price to drop 18%. And in June 2024, Nelson Peltz's Trian Fund Management acquired a "significant claim" in Rentokil Initial; later that year Trian Partners' Brian Baldwin took a seat on the Rentokil board of directors — a move many believe gives Trian Partners more influence with Rentokil Initial shareholders and influence change.

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RYAN JUMP,
Director of Pest Control Business Growth,
Scorpion

5 QUESTIONS WITH RYAN JUMP

Today's homeowners expect fast responses, four-star review minimums and easy ways to contact you. To stay ahead of the competition, your marketing needs to drive revenue and remove guesswork. Ryan Jump, Director of Pest Control Business Growth at Scorpion, shared insights on how PCOs can drive sustainable growth through innovative marketing approaches.

1 What shifts are you seeing in customer expectations and how does that shape modern marketing?

Today's homeowners demand speed and look for trust before they make a decision. Real life example: My wife noticed ants in our kitchen and texted me to handle it. While stuck in meetings, I needed a pest control provider without making a call. I googled "Pest Control" on my phone, found one with great reviews, and scheduled via chat. Scorpion equips PCOs with the tools to provide quick, meaningful and seamless customer interactions.

2 How can digital marketing complement door-to-door efforts to increase route density in target neighborhoods?

Door-to-door strategies build personal connections, but many homeowners just won't answer the door. Digital marketing is there when they don't. It can warm up those homeowners through local SEO and targeted zip code marketing ahead of time and helps you connect

with those that don't answer the door.

Scorpion recommends an integrated marketing approach to build familiarity before the first knock and help you stay visible in key markets.

3 A lot of operators worry about marketing ROI. How does Scorpion help track what's working?

Scorpion integrates with field management systems (FSMs), like FieldRoutes, to track revenue data and attribute it to specific marketing efforts. Instead of guessing which campaigns drive results, you can see exactly what works with transparent reporting. This helps us make smarter marketing budget decisions based on revenue, not vanity metrics like traffic and clicks. By focusing on actual returns, Scorpion's technology automatically invests in the strategies that maximize profit.

4 What's something PCOs should start doing when it comes to marketing, and something they should stop?

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5 What's a key factor that makes PCOs working with Scorpion successful vs. those that don't?

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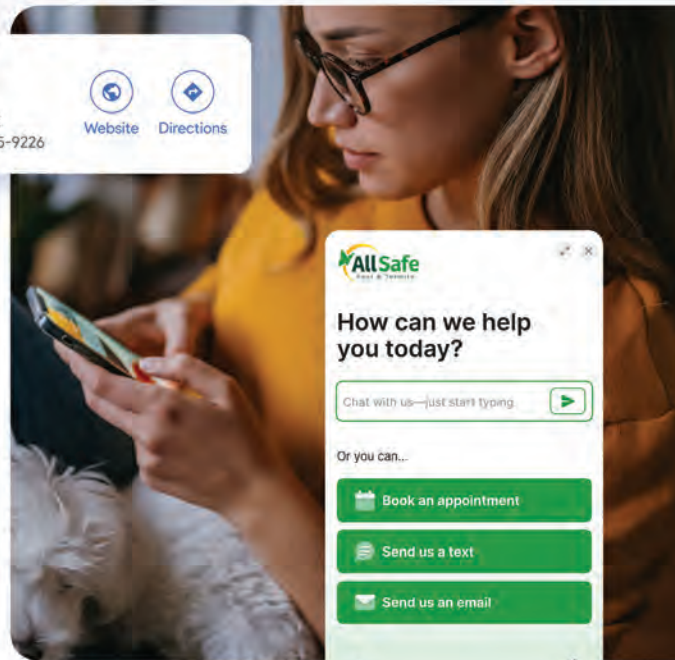
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Ransom acknowledged the integration's complexities. "We've worked on unifying management teams, aligning systems, and harmonizing employee benefits," he said. "Our new systems are about 95% designed and tested, and we're actively deploying them across the business. The biggest challenge has been integrating two great businesses while still maintaining focus on the day-to-day operations. But we're confident that we'll overcome these challenges; the future looks fantastic — we're building something great."

In March 2024, Rentokil released its final 2023 results, and during that reporting Ransom said he anticipated Rentokil realizing about \$325 million in pre-tax synergies from the Terminix acquisition. Ransom said Rentokil is still on target to hit that figure. "There are two main sources of synergies: reducing overheads through economies of scale, such as in property and procurement, and improving operational efficiencies, like optimizing routes to reduce drive time. At the same time, we're making significant investments in training, employee benefits, marketing

and IT. It's not just about cutting costs — it's about ensuring the business is fit for the future."

M&A UPDATE. Looking at the global pest control market, Ransom sees opportunities for expansion. He noted that in the U.S. there are an estimated 19,000 pest control companies, 10,000 in Europe and 30,000 in Asia. This fragmentation presents opportunities for consolidation, Ransom said.

"Our strategy is to acquire businesses for density in cities, to support future growth in emerging markets, and to acquire unique capabilities, such as technology," he said. "For example, we acquired a company in Israel that's a leader in camera-based pest control technology. This is how we approach acquisitions: to build scale, drive efficiency and tap into new technologies."

Ransom said Rentokil will continue to pursue acquisitions that allow the company to build density in cities and support its long-term growth strategy, particularly in emerging markets. "Rentokil's global pres-

ence and ability to integrate acquisitions effectively gives us a strong competitive advantage," he said. "We'll continue to focus on acquiring businesses that complement our strategy, whether for density, technology or future growth potential."

In terms of 2025 M&A activity, Ransom said Rentokil expects to spend about \$250 million, a portion of which will be spent in the U.S. "We're being a little more cautious with acquisitions in the U.S. as we integrate Terminix," Ransom said. "There's a lot of complexity involved, and we typically avoid acquiring businesses in markets where we're actively integrating. However, we're still making acquisitions and will remain active for the right deals. For the must-have deals, we certainly don't want to miss out, as once those opportunities are gone, they're gone."

Another important recent development for Rentokil in North America has been a leadership change. Brad Paulsen, who had served as CEO of Rentokil North America since December 2023, transitioned out of that position earlier this year and was replaced on an interim basis by Alain Mof-

Rentokil Through the Years



1925 - Founder Harold Maxwell-Lefroy, the first professor of entomology at the Imperial College, and his business partner Bessie Eades, introduce Rentokil as a brand name.

1925

1935

1944 - Rentokil hires Dr. Norman Hickin as scientific director. He wrote more than 20 books and helped the company develop fly sprays, insect powders, mothproofing and dry rot treatments.



1957 - Rentokil is bought by British Ratin for \$107,556.



1945

1955



1969 - A new laboratory block opens at the company's Felcourt head office in East Grinstead, dedicated to science, research and development.

1965

1975

1960s-1970s - Expansion in Europe and to countries in Africa, Asia and the Middle East; Australasia and Oceania; North America, Central and South America; and the Caribbean.



froid, the company's chief commercial officer. "Alain is an experienced pest control leader who's run our businesses in Europe, Australia and New Zealand, as well as our marketing and innovation teams. He's hit the ground running, and I'm sure the team will enjoy working with him." Moffroid is based out of Miami.

FOCUS ON INNOVATION. Ransom said Rentokil's commitment to science and technology is aimed at providing better, faster and more cost-effective solutions for customers. "We've focused on creating solutions that use fewer chemicals, offer early warnings of problems and help prevent larger issues," he said. "We've had this commitment for a century, but it has accelerated in the last decade."

For example, in 2017, Rentokil opened its global research and development center, The Power Centre, and in 2024, the Rentokil Terminix Innovation Center in Irving, Texas, opened. These centers serve a variety of technical and training functions. This includes a focus on public health pests "In Dallas, the team focuses

on residential pest control, termites and mosquitoes, while the UK center focuses on rodent control," Ransom said.

On the technology front, Rentokil is a leader in the use of rodent monitoring connected devices and more recently added cameras and the use of artificial intelligence (AI) analysis. Its PestConnect service, which monitors rodent activity 24/7, has now deployed half a million units in the field. In the UK and Netherlands, more than 25% of the company's commercial business is now using connected devices, Ransom shared.

Rentokil's innovation is focused on customer service and cost-efficiency, finding cost-efficient solutions at lower costs. Currently, the company has 75 live innovation projects, divided into three horizons: (1) Innovations ready for market within the next 12 months; (2) Solutions to be introduced in the next one to three years; and (3) Long-term, "blue sky" innovations, such as generative AI solutions. "We're balancing innovations we can monetize now with those for the future of pest control," Ransom said.

TAKING TIME TO CELEBRATE. To mark its 100th anniversary, Rentokil is planning a large-scale virtual celebration involving all 68,500 colleagues. Also planned are a variety of company-wide events, including 100 charitable donations, with each country selecting a cause or charity to support. These initiatives will range from financial contributions to employees volunteering their time. Rentokil also plans to produce a commemorative book featuring stories, photographs and videos from across the business. Additionally, the company hopes to host a special event at the House of Commons.

Ransom said Rentokil's centenary celebration includes a senior leadership conference "to discuss how we stay relevant for the next 100 years — continuing to innovate and investing in technology while keeping the core values that got us to this point. It's a chance to reflect, but also a time to thank our colleagues and customers who've helped us get here, and to give back to the communities we work with." ▀

The author is senior news editor of PCT.

1990 - Rentokil continues to expand geographically, with business lines including office cleaning, tropical plants and hygiene services.



2013 - Rentokil launches The world's first pop-up restaurant.

2022 - Acquisition of Terminix in the U.S. makes Rentokil the world's largest pest control company.



2025
100 years
of Rentokil
Rentokil
100 YEARS

1985

1995

2005

2015

2020

2025

2006 - Acquisition of J.C. Ehrlich, a \$125 million business headquartered in Reading, Pa., provides Rentokil with a platform for North America expansion.



2024 - U.S. Innovation center opened in Dallas.

2024 - Rentokil Initial is ranked as one of the world's best companies to work for by TIME.





National Exterminating founders Randy and Carol Abbitt.

National Exterminating Continues the Family Legacy

Jessica Godfrey and Travis Abbitt, second-generation owners of National Exterminating, are working hard to carry on their family's legacy in the pest control industry by giving back to employees and customers. **By Amanda Joerndt**

Buying employees cars, helping them pay to bury loved ones, paying for braces for employees' children, covering health care expenses — these are all ways National Exterminating founders Randy and Carol Abbitt have given back to their company's key players during the last 50 years.

The Abbitts started the company out of their home situated on Virginia's Chesapeake Bay in 1975. Randy would sell the service, go home and change and then go in the field to perform the service, while

Carol worked the phones, said Jessica Godfrey, Randy's daughter, who is now a co-owner of the company, alongside her brother and mother.

"My mom is a very hard worker, not only at work, but at home as well. She gave that structure and flow to the company," she said. "I feel like even to this day, my dad is a visionary and always looking for ways to expand the business and help our customers."

Entrepreneurship is at the heart of her family, Godfrey said, and the National

Exterminating headquarters is also home to several other business endeavors the family runs. As a little boy, Randy grew up fishing in the river. This passion led to the family owning a marina in Newport News, Va., that is now owned by Godfrey.

"Fishing was always a thing in the Abbitt family and when my mom met my dad, she naturally fell into boating. It's in our blood," she said.

FINDING KEY AREAS OF GROWTH. Scott Monds, National Exterminating's

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Clockwise from top: Company employees taking a group picture; company headquarters in Newport News, Va.; and left to right: Travis Abbitt, second generation co-owner, Randy and Carol Abbitt, founders, and Jessica Godfrey, second-generation co-owner.



general manager, has been with the company for 14 years and was introduced to the industry through his father, who fished along the river with Randy for many years.

Monds said from the beginning of his time at the company, Randy wasn't scared to "push the envelope."

"He would get together with some other business owners and they would spitball ideas. That's one of the reasons that we have consistent quarterly pest control services," he said. "He broke the standards that were set in the industry, like doing termite pre-treatments for builders in our service areas."

When Monds came on board — having no prior experience in pest control — he was able to focus on specific operational aspects for the company, like customer

communication and how employees interacted with customers.

"I noticed we were doing wonderful inspections and giving the paperwork back to the customers, but they couldn't understand it. It was like a doctor giving you X-rays, and you had to determine if you had a broken bone," he said. "I feel like [improved] customer communication allowed our customers to understand how to better take care of their homes."

With a focus on customer communication over the years, word of mouth and referrals from real estate property sales became 60% of the firm's revenue, he said.

"We have a large real estate market here and we have our in-house treatments for when houses are being sold," he said. "We send out about 20 letters a week just on the

sale of houses and we pride ourselves on getting people to the closing table. There's a lot of loyalty [among] our agents," who appreciate National Exterminating getting services done on time.

Monds also honed in on how the company performs rodent control services and has been able to turn rodent work into a year-round revenue source, instead of just in the wintertime.

While Randy doesn't come into the office as much today, he's still around and "sitting at home in his office finding ways to grow the business," Godfrey said. "He'll never walk away. Not one person runs this company. We have a team that makes it all happen." ▀

The author is digital editor of PCT.

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NEW TO THE LIST:



Environmental Pest Management

Environmental Pest Management has remained a dominant player in treating apartment complexes thanks to developments in owner Jason Carpenter's PestGenius pest control software. **By Amanda Joerndt**

Technology continues to be a key driver of growth in the pest control industry.

To stay ahead of those advancements, Jason Carpenter, owner of Environmental Pest Management, Columbus, Ohio, has grown his 22-year pest control business by treating close to 1 million apartment units annually, with the help of innovative software and employee training.

EARLY YEARS. After working for 13 years, Carpenter took a gamble and started his own business by taking out a second mortgage and using \$10,000 from his savings to start Environmental Pest Management.

In 2006, a few years into business, Carpenter said he noticed that he could capitalize on the rise of bed bug infestations by focusing on the treatment of the nuisance pest in multi-unit housing properties.

"I had a call that came in from a large property management company," he said. "[When] I walked into the unit, it was just loaded with bed bugs. I said, 'Forget this, I'm not doing it.' When I was walking out, I asked how much the job was going for, and she said \$40,000, and then I stopped and said, 'Why not?'"

Come to find out, the same property manager had 10 other buildings on their property. What was one \$40,000 job, turned into many others for Carpenter.

"I kept wondering how many other properties in the area were just like these ones," he said. "[It turned out] she was just the tip of the iceberg."

Today, 90% of Environmental Pest Management's revenue comes from apartments, and 10% comes from residential, Carpenter said.

THE COMPANY NOW. Business has become a family affair for Carpenter, as his wife, Karen, runs the day-to-day operations, and their eldest son, Brandon, is responsible for managing technicians and the wildlife department.

Along with 75 other employees, Carpenter said it's vitally important they un-



Left to right: Brandon Carpenter, vice president of operations; Kayla Carpenter, marketing; Karen Carpenter, chief operations officer; and Jason Carpenter, chief executive officer.

derstand their company's vision and then align the vision internally to assign roles throughout the company for continued growth.

"If we say our vision is to deliver exceptional experience every time, we need to define what 'every time' means," Carpenter said. "I can't say I expect our employees to deliver exceptional experiences without telling them what steps to follow in order to do that."

EFFICIENCY THROUGH TECHNOLOGY.

Starting in pest control in 1990, Carpenter is no stranger to the ways technology has shaped business efficiencies over the years.

He remembered the years before cell phones where he would put a quarter in a pay phone in between services to communicate with co-workers in the office. Additionally, he recalled having to hand-write everything.

As the years passed, he said he was trying to find ways to become more technologically efficient. Then, while attending a seminar, he said he had the idea to create his own pest control software.

"This guy was talking about the software he uses for his HVAC and cleaning company,

so I met with him and asked if his software could help with our apartment complexes," Carpenter said. "We wrote the code together...it's been 18 years since we've had that software and have changed it countless times."

His in-house software, PestGenius, tracks, records and monitors all of the pest control treatments completed at any one particular property. It shows where the issues are in each unit, what the next steps are for eradication and builds a report from there, Carpenter said. "It pulls files, videos and photos attached to the unit," he said. "It also allows the managers and owners to pull the information for themselves."

Carpenter said by utilizing this software for nearly two decades, it's given Environmental Pest Management a leg up to grow significantly where "nobody else is,"

which is through apartment complexes. "We train our employees on more than just how to use the software, but how to interact with the customer and different standard operating procedures for whatever technician is servicing the property," he said.

As the company continues to be in high-growth mode, its three main focuses are efficiencies, resources and training, according to Carpenter. "This has been a big focus of mine, and we want to make it into a video format so we can speed up the training" and use it for future training purposes, he said. ▀

The author is digital editor of PCT.



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Opening Doors or Getting Slammed?

Door-to-door sales can be hard. Here are several qualities PMPs should look for when searching for the ideal D2D salesperson.

By Addison Foreman

Door-to-door (D2D) selling can be challenging, but companies that have mastered this sales strategy are reaping its benefits. At PCT's Top 100 Awards Ceremony & Executive Summit last summer in Nashville, a panel of PMPs who have D2D pest control sales experience shared their thoughts and strategies.

GROWTH FROM D2D SALES. Preston Peterson has been involved in D2D sales for 20 years, starting while he was selling in college, working during summer months. He is a co-owner of Alta Pest Control, Round Rock, Texas, which

has experienced significant growth with 18 locations spread across the country, including Washington, Nevada, Texas, Oklahoma and Virginia.

In the early days of running his company, Ardent Pest Control (which later merged with Alta Pest Control), Peterson said the process for running the business wasn't so much "strategic" as it was a team working together. Eventually, the company *did* become more strategic, working to grow in, and understand, each individual market in their respective geographic locations.

"The more concentrated we are, the

more valuable we are; the more resources we can put into that, the better leadership we have in those areas," Peterson said. "It's hard to build a lot of markets with great leadership" but it is something the company strives for.

Daniel Headrick began working as a technician for Moxie Pest Control, Irving, Texas, in 2009, when the company operated just five locations. After a hiatus, Headrick returned in 2020, so he has observed first hand Moxie's rapid growth. "It's been a wild ride over the last four years specifically, and we're just loving it," he said.

D2D has become one of Moxie's main

marketing channels. Headrick discussed how Moxie decides when to enter a new geographic area: “We start by looking at what area are the emerging markets that we would want to...get into from a growth perspective and we start concentrating there,” he said.

The key for Moxie, he said, is to make sure they are getting the right customers in each area — the ones that are going to stay with the company for 20-plus years.

Byron Gifford, owner of Evergreen Pest Solutions, began his career in D2D sales and it has spurred growth for Evergreen, which is headquartered in Ogden, Utah — the state that is an epicenter for D2D sales.

Gifford’s company has focused less on trying to expand geographically, instead concentrating on organically growing existing regional locations.

“For instance, [in 2024] in our [Virginia] market, [we] expanded out to Roanoke, but we [had] extra sales force,” he said. “We expanded in that direction because we’ve got the resources to do it. We’ve got the manpower, and we’ll get a bigger numbers commitment,” Gifford said. “We just scale according to what we can do without breaking the system we have — without spending too much money.”

Gifford said the key to successful growth is making sure the company has the resources to accomplish its goals.

SELLING ACROSS THE COUNTRY. Having employed D2D sales teams in a variety of regions across the U.S., these companies have had to face different types of sales environments; some which might not be as receptive to this sales strategy. “There would be differences to some degree, but you adapt. [We’ve] trained ourselves to...simply adapt to the market,” Gifford said.

Headrick emphasized that, for him, the key to selling in various diverse environments is being aware of how people are interacting with the salesperson while they are trying to make a D2D sale.

Similarly, Peterson said that when Ardent enters a new region, they observe, listen and learn. “You find out the benefits [of

that region] — the things you need to focus on in those areas and you just sell according to that,” he said. “It’s a matter of a different learning curve by region.”

BUILDING A GREAT SALESPERSON.

D2D sales are not for the faint of heart. There are several qualities that these PMPs said make an ideal salesman.

“The more people you talk to, the more you’re going to sell. It’s like a math equation, two plus two equals four,” Gifford said. “You want to talk to as many people as possible; get in front of as many faces as possible.”

Peterson said it’s important for his company to have a salesperson with genuine work ethic.

“It’s hard to teach a good work ethic,” he said. “If we find someone who has a good work ethic and they’re disciplined, we can teach them the other skills they need to be successful. Then it’s a matter of building that culture around them.”

At Moxie Pest Control, Headrick said there are two elements to how they train potential salespeople: character development and competence.

“[The book] ‘Seven Habits of Highly Effective People’ is the cornerstone of everything we’re teaching,” Headrick said. “[This includes] even simple things like when you’re in sales talking to a person and recognizing, ‘This actually isn’t a good fit for them. I can’t take advantage of this person,’” Headrick said.

He emphasized teaching new employees to not use people as a means to an end. When selling, it’s important to empathize with customers.

“This is a very personal thing we’re doing,” Headrick said. “We’re going to someone’s house, right? We’re inviting them to learn about pest control. We want to do that the neighborly way.”

D2D salespeople often face a high level of daily rejection. Some workers might not be able to handle it. “(It’s) tough,” Gifford said. “I probably had a 10%, maybe 15%, success rate of those that I talked to.”

Gifford explained there is a learning curve to training new salespeople. To make



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At PCT's Top 100 Awards Ceremony and Executive Summit last year: Left to right: Jodi Dorsch, PCT; Byron Gifford, Evergreen Pest Solutions; Daniel Headrick, Moxie Pest Control; and Preston Peterson, Alta Pest Control.

sure employees are doing their part, the company looks at revenue generated per month in terms of YTD. Each month the salesperson should produce a certain percentage of their overall sales.

DEVELOPING TECHNOLOGY. Figuring out how to use new technology in different areas of the business and in each market can often be challenging. But once you do find the right spot for it, new technology can be a real high point.

For example, Gifford said years ago, he used only paper contracts.

Now, his company uses software with multiple functions, including employee training and ensuring that locations are not overlapping.

"All of this is accessible to our representatives now," he said. "Back in the day that just simply wasn't there. It's making things much easier, simpler, streamlined."

Headrick's company has been using an app for several years that utilizes artificial intelligence (AI).

The app records doorknockers' conversations and slices them up, identifying the flow of the conversation and giving suggestions for improvement.

"Then they can submit those to the manager, and the manager, without being right next to them, can give them feedback on, 'Hey, focus on this. I listened to your conversation. This is where you want to sell,'" Headrick said.

Peterson said technology has helped all pest management companies — older companies, smaller companies and those in between. "It's been nicer for the industry as a whole because a lot of technology [is] beneficial," he said. "They're beneficial for our reps and...the company, but they're also beneficial for us to be able to help monitor what our people are doing

out there so that we can make sure that we have the best resources and tools."

MANAGING HYPERGROWTH. While it's difficult for everyone to be successful at D2D sales, many firms have found massive success — adding hundreds of accounts every year. Headrick's company opened 10 branches in six weeks in 2024, starting in April. The preparation for this massive growth period started a year before with a branch manager training program.

The program made sure people were prepared long before the branch was opened. A lot of training and fieldwork with new employees went into their preparation. "Training is my answer to how you handle growth. Things are not ever perfect when you're growing in hypergrowth, they never are," Headrick said. ▀

The author is a PCT contributing writer.

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America's New Millionaire Class

Private equity is pouring money into skilled-trade small businesses — next thing you know, you're running an empire. **By Te-Ping Chen**

Editor's note: This article originally appeared in the Wall Street Journal under the headline, "America's New Millionaire Class: Plumbers and HVAC Entrepreneurs." Pest control and HVAC are service industries with many similarities, including how they are perceived by private equity firms. Here, WSJ writer Te-Ping Chen breaks down why skilled-trade companies have become PE darlings. Then, compare notes to our industry as Kemp Anderson narrows in on pest control and its increased PE involvement the last few years (see article on page 68.)

Aaron Rice has two logos tattooed on his left leg: one from the plumbing business he co-founded more than a decade ago, and another from the private-equity-backed company that recently bought it.

Few businesses are as vital to their customers as local plumbing, heating or air-conditioning companies—especially in places like Tucson, Ariz., where Rice works and residents sweltered in 100-degree heat most days this summer.

For years, Rice, 43 years old, was skep-

tical when out-of-state investors offered to buy his company. He assumed most of them knew little about skilled-trade work or his customers. They were just looking to make a buck. But in 2022, when approached by a local HVAC company backed by private equity, he changed his mind, figuring that they knew the business.

"The trades are hard work. A lot of today's society, picking up a shovel is foreign to them," he says.

/// continued on page 64

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A large, detailed image of a mosquito, tinted in shades of blue and green, serves as the background for the entire page. The mosquito is shown from a side profile, facing right, with its long legs and wings clearly visible.

2025 STATE OF THE MOSQUITO CONTROL MARKET REPORT



+ Growth Potential + Doubling Down + To Add-On or
to Bundle? + How to Accurately Price Jobs + What Motivates
Customers to Buy Mosquito Services? + Thorough Treatment
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Growth Potential

Managing mosquitoes was an area of growth for pest management companies last year. According to the 2025 PCT State of the Mosquito Control Market survey, 57% of pest management professionals (PMPs) reported an increase in mosquito-related revenue at their service locations in 2024.

At the typical pest control location, mosquito control generated 9% of revenue.

It was a very good year for mosquito control at Ultra Pest Control, Huntington, W.Va., said Owner Greg Stephens. “We had an increase of probably 60% of mosquito customers last year.”

The company has offered mosquito control since it was founded 10 years ago and customer interest in the service

continues to grow, he said.

“Every year, it’s increased,” said Stephens. “We do have our share of mosquitoes” in the region. Interest in a combination mosquito-tick control program also boosted revenue, he said.

Likewise, Victory Pest Control, Myrtle Beach, S.C., had “a lot more people inquiring about mosquito control” in 2024, said General Manager Ryan Ewalt, noting that weather played a big role in the uptick.

Mosquitoes need standing water to complete their life cycle, and his area received plenty of rainfall. “We’ve had a lot of storms here in South Carolina,” said Ewalt. More moisture plus hot summer temperatures created ideal conditions for mosquito breeding.

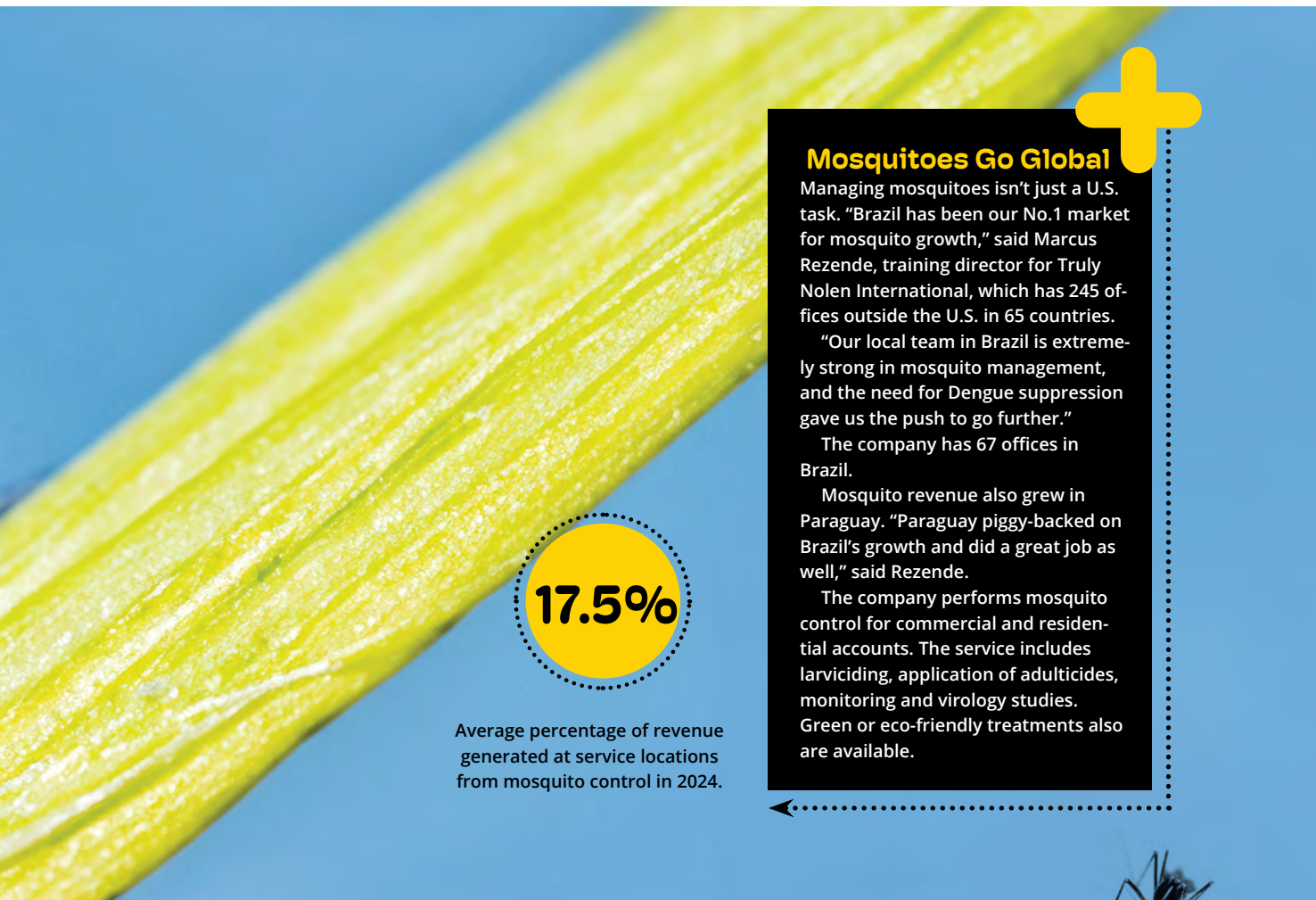
Mosquito control accounted for 5% to 10% of overall revenue at Victory Pest Control. “It’s something we implemented within the last two years, so we’re still growing with it,” Ewalt said.

In other parts of the country, weather kept the lid on revenue growth.

“It did not increase because we did not get the rain,” said Chuck Wells, owner of the Mosquito Squad franchise in Scottsdale, Ariz. Three years ago, his region got 10 inches of rain. Over the last two years? Only about an inch.

“That really affected the mosquitoes, because people are not going to be calling unless they’re being bitten by the mosquitoes. So, we’re in a holding pattern.”

When rain eventually falls, he expects billions of mosquito eggs to hatch, reviv-



Mosquitoes Go Global

Managing mosquitoes isn't just a U.S. task. "Brazil has been our No.1 market for mosquito growth," said Marcus Rezende, training director for Truly Nolen International, which has 245 offices outside the U.S. in 65 countries.

"Our local team in Brazil is extremely strong in mosquito management, and the need for Dengue suppression gave us the push to go further."

The company has 67 offices in Brazil.

Mosquito revenue also grew in Paraguay. "Paraguay piggy-backed on Brazil's growth and did a great job as well," said Rezende.

The company performs mosquito control for commercial and residential accounts. The service includes larviciding, application of adulticides, monitoring and virology studies. Green or eco-friendly treatments also are available.



Average percentage of revenue generated at service locations from mosquito control in 2024.

ing demand for the service.

A dry summer in greater Chicago also limited demand for mosquito control at Rose Pest Solutions.

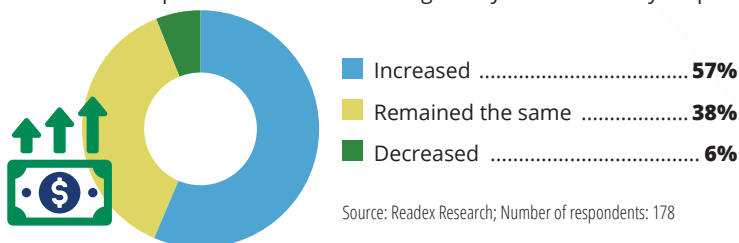
"It was a pretty average year," said Zach Bahrke, who managed the company's Wheeling, Ill., branch last year and is now its operations director. "It wasn't a banner year, but it wasn't terrible."

According to the PCT survey, 38% of PMPs said mosquito revenue held steady last year. Six percent said it declined.

Over the past seven years, more pest control companies added mosquito control to their service offerings. In 2025, 83% of pest management companies offered the service, up from 54% in 2018. +

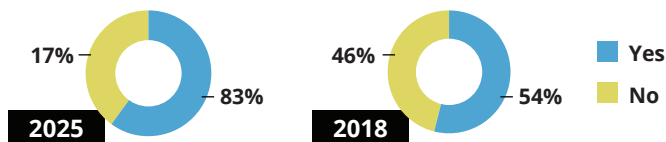
Rising Revenue

For those companies that have provided mosquito control for longer than one year, how did the revenue derived from your service location's mosquito control services change last year versus the year prior?



More Perform Mosquito Control

Does your service location offer mosquito control services?



Doubling Down

In the year ahead, Dallas Whitt said he expects mosquito control revenue to double at Critical Hit Pest Management, Shawnee, Okla. It's a good fit for the two-year-old company.

"I love it as a service line because of a couple things. It's good money for what the work entails, and generally, when you have customers that are paying for monthly mosquito control, they are more open to having you do their pest control and lawn care," he said.

Greg Stephens, Ultra Pest Control, anticipates the service line to grow. "We always look for 20% to 25% growth each year, and we can do it," he said.

Weather and geography can help or hurt this growth. In regions like Idaho, Colorado and Utah, where Matt Summers, president of Atlas Pest Solutions, Huntsville, Ala., lived previously, mosquitoes become intense for a spell but

cease to be an issue when cold weather hits. As such, the season for mosquito control is relatively short.

But in the South, it's a different story. "We may see them in December, if it's warm," said Summers. The potential to offer nearly year-round mosquito control is a boon to the business, where the typical season lasts eight months.

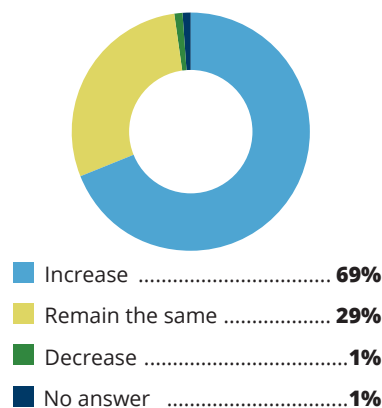
Finding and keeping good employees to do the work remained a hurdle for Chuck Wells, Mosquito Squad, and, he said, it may suppress growth in the year ahead. "Trying to hold on to technicians who are responsible, who will show up; that's been a big challenge."

According to the 2025 PCT State of the Mosquito Control Market survey, 69% of pest management professionals expected revenue generated from mosquito control services at their service location to increase this year. +



A Buzzy Outlook

How do you anticipate revenue generated from your service location's mosquito control services to change this year compared with 2024?



Source: Readex Research; Number of respondents: 185

How to Accurately Price Jobs

Last year, the average price charged for a typical recurring mosquito control service visit at a residential account was \$108, according to the 2025 PCT State of the Mosquito Control Market survey.

PMPs were equally divided on how that price might change this year. Forty-five percent expected it to stay the same; 43% anticipated a price increase.

Pricing mosquito jobs accurately can be tough, according to Brent Marshall, who manages Lakeshore Pest Control. Based near Grand Haven, Mich., the company performs mosquito control for affluent homeowners, many who spend their summers in the region.

"My least favorite thing is to price out mosquito sprays," Marshall said. It's important to understand the

customer's outdoor habits and where they spend time, he said. Just because a customer has five acres doesn't mean all five acres need to be treated. Plus, every property has different mosquito-breeding issues, so you can't use a blanket approach to pricing jobs.

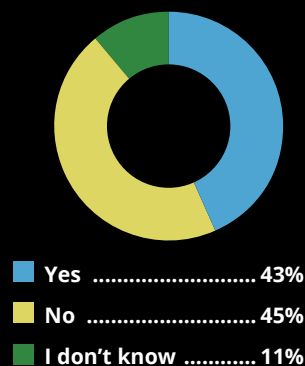
"I don't like to price them by Google Maps," Marshall said. "I'll tell them, 'Let me walk your property and see [whether] I can give you better, accurate pricing.'"

Marshall advised "getting your numbers down" before mosquito season begins. Know what chemical you're going to use and what it costs to apply per gallon so you can estimate jobs accurately.

That way, "you're not robbing the customers, but you're making enough money to make it worth your while," he said.

More or the Same?

Do you expect your service location to increase the price it charges for recurring residential mosquito control service visits in 2025?



Source: Readex Research; Number of respondents: 176

To Add-On or Bundle?

Most pest management locations sold mosquito control as an add-on service, according to 87% of PMPs in the 2025 PCT State of the Mosquito Control Market survey. A quarter — 25% — also included it with general pest control services.

Upselling customers to a bundle with mosquito control was how Critical Hit Pest Management got most of its mosquito customers last year.

“They get the regular pest services, plus the additional seven services for mosquito control, April to October,” said Owner Dallas Whitt.

The bundle offers advantages from an operations standpoint, he said. Whitt bills monthly for it, generating consistent cash flow, and performs the service while onsite doing other work, which reduces windshield time and boosts productivity.

Mosquito control is also an add-on service at Ultra Pest Control. However, the company doesn’t hold customers to a contract; they can cancel service at any time. The company requires clients to sign a service agreement. This identifies how often and for how many months service will be performed, as well as legalese that protects the company from liability.

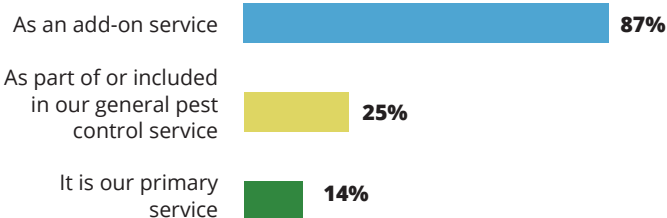
“But we don’t lock them to it,” said Owner Greg Stephens, who’s worked in the industry for 30 years. “I would never do that to a customer. I don’t want to go to someone’s house that doesn’t want me there. I’ve been in that situation, and it’s not fun.”

Mosquito control was the primary service for 14% of locations surveyed. The biggest market for mosquito control was residential accounts (98%), followed by commercial accounts (76%). **+**



Option #1

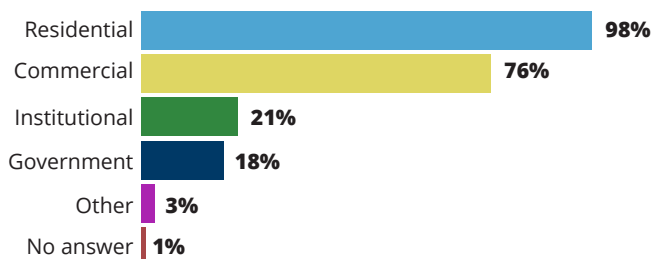
How does your service location offer mosquito control services?



Source: Readex Research; Respondents: 185; Respondents could select more than one response

Home Rules

For which types of accounts does your service location offer mosquito control services?



Source: Readex Research; Respondents: 185; Respondents could select more than one response

EFFECTIVE SOLUTIONS FOR MOSQUITO CONTROL

As families and communities begin their migrations to more outside activities, Pest Management Professionals will have the opportunity to be the first line of defense in controlling mosquito populations. Beyond the nuisance of these biting pests, your customers have now also become more aware of the growing public health concerns that mosquitoes may transmit viruses and diseases.

For effective mosquito control solutions, experts recommend using an IPM approach that starts with surveillance and moves towards chemical treatments that target the mosquito at various life stages. This approach includes the use of an adulticide, synergist and insect growth regulator (IGR).



Effective Mosquito Control Throughout The Season

With an IPM approach, Pest Management Professionals proactively control mosquitoes over the long-term, so customers enjoy the outdoors and communities feel safe from vector-borne illnesses.

Surveillance and Exclusion

Inspect the entire area for harborage and breeding sites. Remove all sources of standing water and any other potential breeding sites. It is important to include the customer in this process and communicate the importance of correcting all conducive conditions.

Chemical Treatments

ADULTICIDE

Adulticides are important because they provide immediate relief from an adult population of biting mosquitoes. For best results, choose an adulticide with microcap technology. Microcaps provide controlled release of the active ingredient, thereby providing control for an extended period of time on difficult surfaces.

SYNERGIST

Synergists are not insecticides by themselves but they enhance insecticide efficacy. Synergist use combats insecticide resistance present in the mosquito population. Piperonyl butoxide, commonly referred to as PBO, is one of the most common synergists used in insect control today. It prevents the breakdown of the insecticide in the insect which leads to increased efficacy at lower concentrations.

Mosquitoes are capable of producing many generations in a short time. One female mosquito may produce between one thousand and three thousand eggs in her lifetime. Within a few weeks, thousands of eggs will have become adult females laying eggs. The high numbers of individual mosquitoes in field populations combined with rapid reproduction results in an increased potential for insecticide resistance making a synergist an important part of mosquito management.

INSECT GROWTH REGULATOR

Insect growth regulators (IGRs) have a very different mode of action than adulticides, affecting the hormonal system of the insects rather than killing them outright. One type of IGR is a juvenile hormone (JH) mimic. Pyriproxyfen is a JH mimic and can prevent the transition of larvae into adults, effectively ending their life cycle in the pupal stage. It remains bioavailable after applied. What does that mean for you? It means when you use an IGR to treat a potential breeding site surfaces like tires or ceramic pots, the IGR will still work to prevent emergence of the biting adults for an extended period of time. This is also true of areas that don't have standing water today, but will collect water after a rain event.

Choose The Right Mosquito Control Product

MGK is unique in the insect control industry. For over 100 years, we have been a leader in the lab and in the field, developing innovative and effective products, including a broad portfolio of mosquito control products for residential and commercial structures. Partner with us to get the results you need in the fight against mosquitoes.

Featured Product

OneGuard® Multi MoA Concentrate

OneGuard Multi MoA Concentrate combines the power of a knockdown agent, microcapped residual adulticide, synergist and NyGuard® IGR in one single product. This multi-mode action, all-in-one solution is effective against Aedes, Anopheles and Culex mosquitoes – those that may transmit or carry West Nile virus, Chikungunya virus and Zika virus. For highly effective knockdown and long-lasting control of mosquitoes, choose OneGuard Multi MoA Concentrate.



For more mosquito control solutions, visit MGK.com/mosquito-control

What Motivates Customers to Buy Mosquito Services?

The number of requests for mosquito service increased significantly (15%) or somewhat (48%) at service locations last year, according to the 2025 PCT State of the Mosquito Control Market survey.

What motivated people to buy? Mostly, the desire to enjoy outdoor spaces without being eaten alive, PMPs said in follow-up interviews.

“Typically, it’s more of a nuisance call,” said Zach Bahrke, operations director of Rose Pest Solutions, for why customers wanted mosquito control service in northern Illinois. “People just want to utilize their property, their entertainment area, pool, tennis court, fireplace.”

Fewer worried about diseases transmitted by mosquitoes. But calls from those customers can increase when local cases of West Nile virus (WNV) make headlines, said Bahrke.

WNV doesn’t motivate many people to purchase mosquito control in Scottsdale, Ariz., but when it does, those customers are anxious for a solution, said Chuck Wells, Mosquito Squad. “We’ve had people come to us who have had West Nile virus, and they’re just terrified of getting it again.”

For Lakeshore Pest Control in western Michigan — where six people died of eastern equine encephalitis in 2019 — it was fear of ticks that spurred growth of the company’s mosquito control program last year.

Customers who are dog owners gravitated to the company’s tick-and-mosquito control program, even though a stand-alone tick treatment was available, said Brent Marshall.

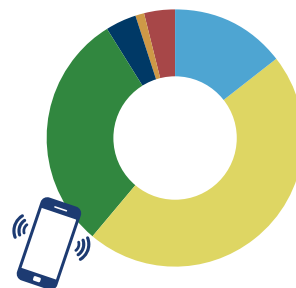
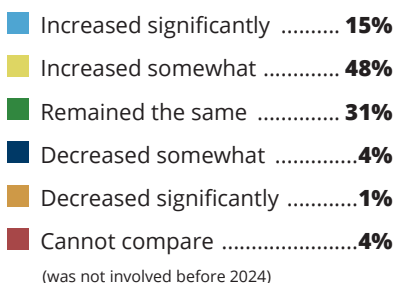
More than half (59%) of PMPs said their customers understand the risks of mosquito-borne diseases.

“Treating mosquitoes is one way our industry protects health and wellness,” said Denise Trad-Wartan, CEO of Trad’s Pest Control, Jacksonville, Fla. **+**



Call Me, Maybe?

How did the number of requests for mosquito control services at your service location change last year versus the year before?

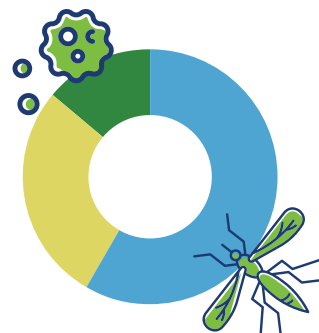
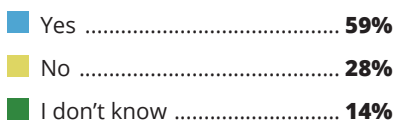


Source: Readex Research; Respondents: 185

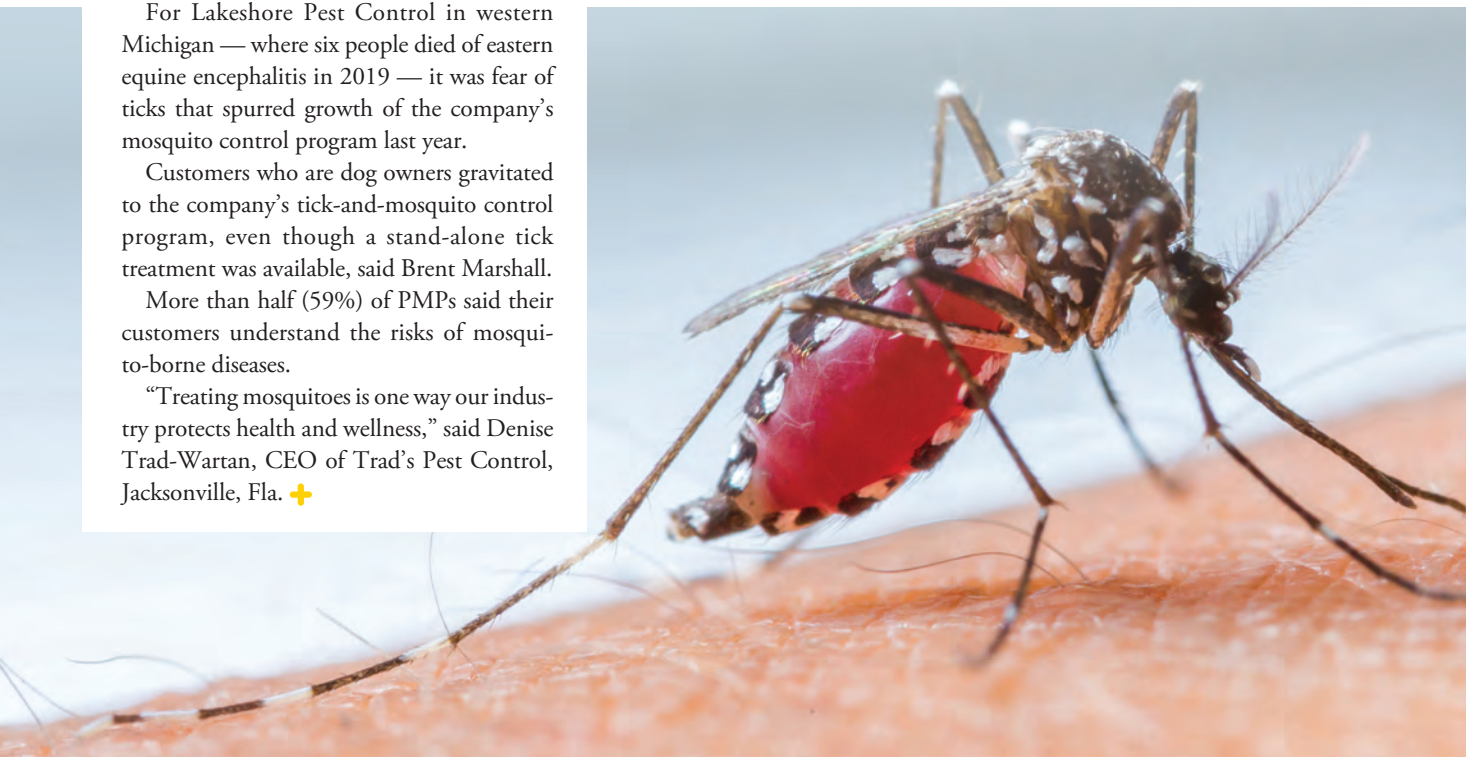


Disease-Savvy

In your opinion, do your customers understand the risks of mosquito-borne diseases?

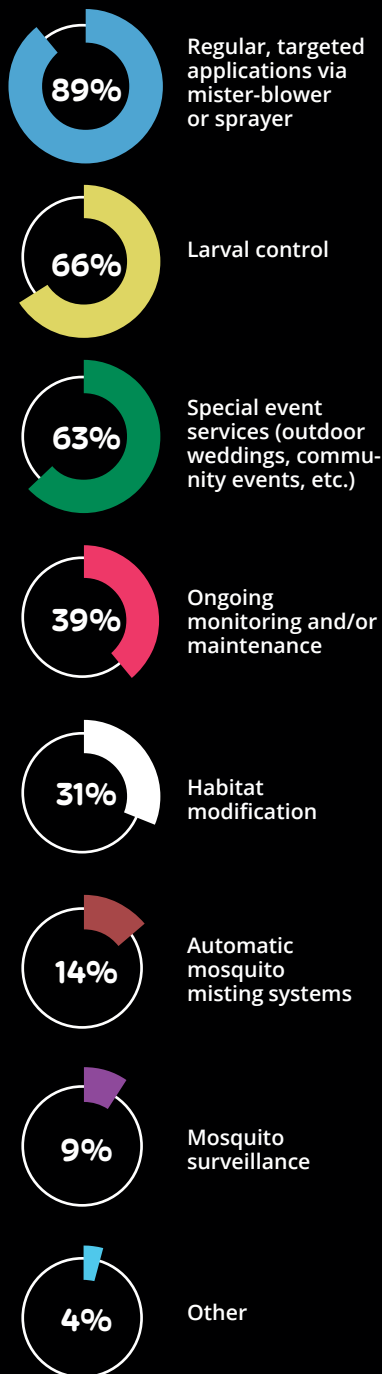


Source: Readex Research; Number of respondents: 185



A Mixed Bag

What types of mosquito control services does your service location offer?



Source: Readex Research; Respondents: 185;
Respondents could select more than one response

Thorough Treatment Reigns Supreme

A comprehensive inspection is the foundation for effective mosquito treatment.

“What we want to do, first of all, is evaluate the property and see if there’s a breeding ground for the mosquitoes,” said Chuck Wells, Mosquito Squad of Scottsdale, Ariz. This may be a fountain or drains containing stagnant water.

Being thorough is key. “Take your time and always look for contributing factors, instead of being a robot and just doing the service,” said Ryan Ewalt, general manager of Victory Pest Control.

If you don’t identify the contributing factors, he said, “your treatments aren’t going to be nearly as effective, and you’re going to get callbacks.”

Technicians at Rose Pest Solutions gather information, putting together pieces of the puzzle to customize treatments for individual homeowners, according to Zach Bahrke, operations director. They follow integrated pest management (IPM) guidelines.

“We’re heavily focused on inspection and IPM and taking a look at the property as a whole and not just going out and spraying,” said Bahrke.

Then, during inspection, technicians identify conducive conditions on the property and how these issues can be addressed. This includes storing the outdoor toys or wheelbarrow differently.

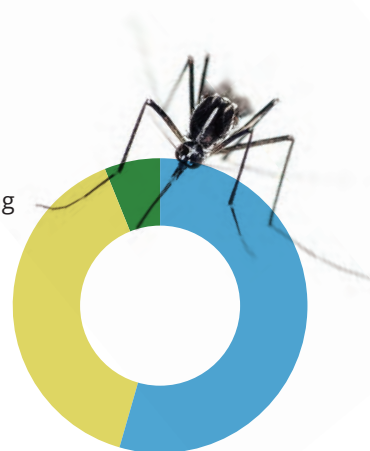
They try to identify the mosquito species to narrow down where specifically to treat, since different species have different resting and breeding behaviors. They interview the customer to learn what time of day they’re being bit and where on the property.

Invasive Questions

Are you concerned about different or invasive mosquito species becoming established in your market?



Source: Readex Research; Respondents: 185



“Really lean into the handful of mosquitoes that you’re going to see in your area and find out the basics on them. That will dictate your inspection,” he said.

According to the 2025 PCT State of the Mosquito Control survey, 54% of PMPs were concerned about different or invasive mosquito species becoming established in their market.

APPLICATION. After inspection comes treatment. “The last step is the chemical control,” said Bahrke, urging PMPs to invest in good equipment. “Something that’s reliable, that’s going to hold up during the season. If you’re doing 15-20 mosquito treatments a day, that equipment is going to get a lot of use.”

The same is true in choosing chemical products. Don’t automatically go with the least expensive. “Find something that’s established, and that’s been proven to work,” said Bahrke.

Mosquito control treatment most often involved regular, targeted applications via mister blower, 89% of PMPs reported. Liquid adulticide (77%) and insect growth regulators (76%) were the most commonly applied products, followed by larvicide (62%).

In follow-up interviews, PMPs said they typically treated landscaping plants

around the home, under the deck and along tree lines.

“Make sure you really concentrate on the underside of that vegetation,” said Ewalt. “Don’t be too quick to get to your next stop.”

Technicians at Lakeshore Pest Control only target non-flowering landscaping plants, said Branch Manager Brent Marshall.

“We don’t want to kill off the beneficial pollinators, so we don’t spray any flowering plants,” he said.

The survey found 49% of service locations used mosquito traps in their treatment protocol.

“We have a few customers that we use the traps on, because no matter what we do, it seems they still always have mosquitoes or a neighbor problem” causing mosquitoes, said Greg Stephens, Ultra Pest Control.



Typical callback rate for mosquito control services

Source: Readex Research; Respondents: 185

Green or botanical sprays were applied by 29% of service locations to control the pests.

OFFER THE BEST SOLUTION. It’s hard to keep customers happy if you don’t understand their tolerance to mosquitoes, said Dallas Whitt, owner of Critical Hit Pest Management.

If a customer is OK with seeing a mosquito here or there, he applies adulticide and insect growth regulator monthly using a backpack mister-blower. For those less tolerant and who want additional coverage, he adds mosquito trapping or installs a mosquito misting system around the home.

“It’s all really based on what level of control that they want to get,” he said.

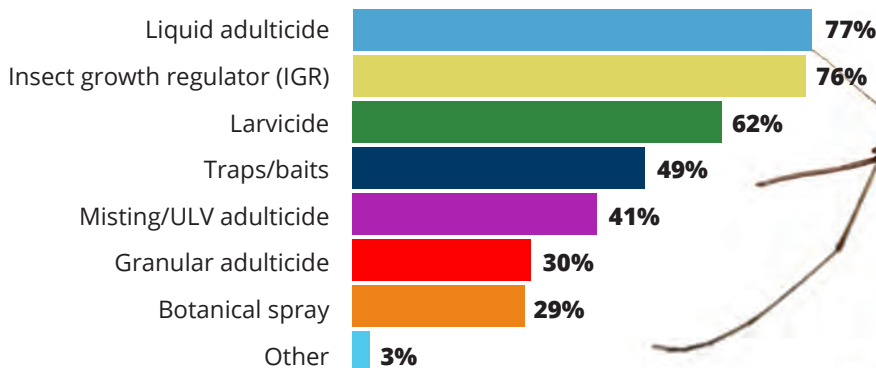
Still, not every property benefits from mosquito treatment. Customers may not have foliage where mosquitoes rest or standing water where they breed; they may live next to environmentally sensitive wetlands; or a neighboring property that is a mosquito factory with containers full of standing water or a green swimming pool.

“We don’t want that customer anyway, because we’re going to have to run back all the time” to re-treat, said Stephens.

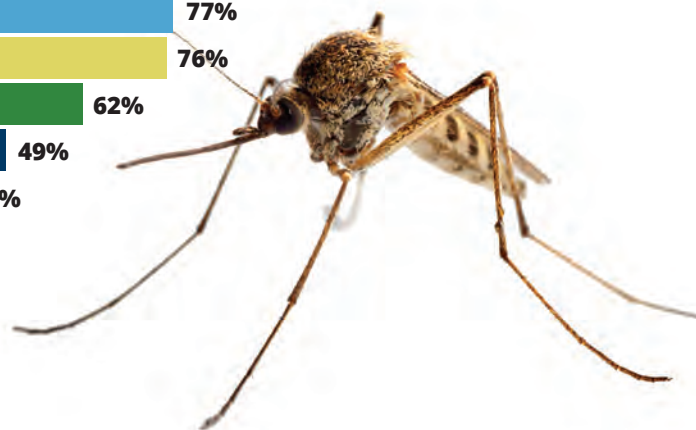
The average callback rate for mosquito control was 5.8%. +

A Wide-Ranging Toolbox

What type of products does your service location use for mosquito control?



Source: Readex Research; Respondents: 185; Respondents could select more than one response





Tackling Insecticide Drift

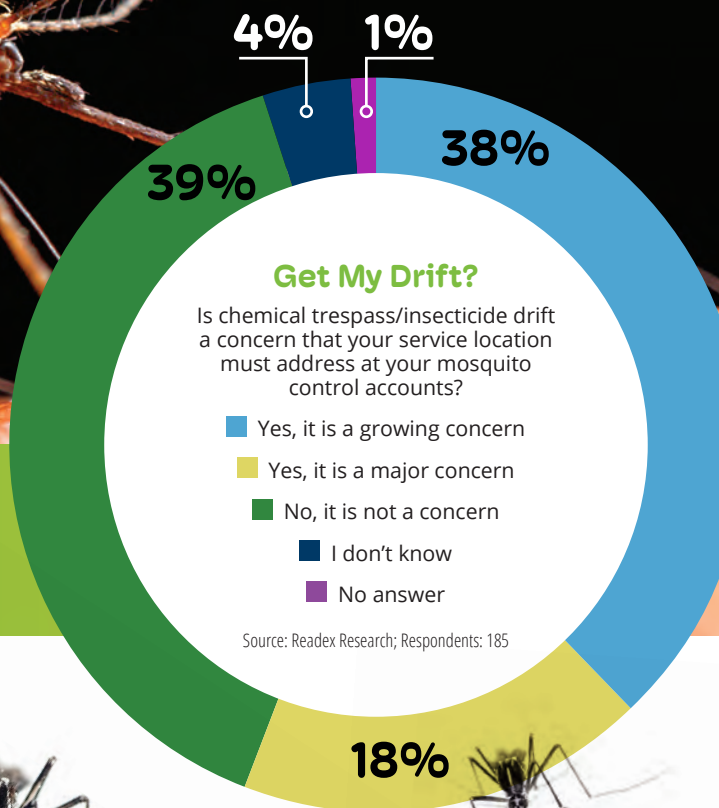
Insecticide drift remains a consideration for PMPs. “Drift is a concern. My technicians know that if it is very windy, then we are not using the mist blower,” said Greg Stephens, owner of Ultra Pest Control.

The same goes if the neighboring property has a lot of flowers. Instead, technicians use a regular backpack sprayer because it produces a larger droplet size. Larger droplets are less likely to get blown in the wind, he said.

A few years ago, Stephens said he had an incident where a neighbor grilling out in his backyard was exposed to drift from his technician’s mosquito treatment.

It’s essential to be mindful of what’s going on next door, whether that’s beekeeping, a koi pond or human activity. “Always walk the property before you treat,” Stephens said.

Insecticide drift was a growing concern at 39% of service locations and a major concern for 18%, according to the 2025 PCT State of the Mosquito Control Market survey. +



About the Survey

Sponsored by MGK, the 2025 PCT State of the Mosquito Market survey was conducted by Readex Research, a privately held research firm based in Stillwater, Minn. A sample of 5,008 pest control company owners, executives, technical directors, general managers and branch managers was systematically selected from the PCT circulation file. Data was collected from 222 respondents — a 4% response rate — via online survey from Feb. 4-19, 2025. For the 185 respondents offering mosquito control services, the margin of error is plus or minus 7.1% at the 95% confidence level. Charts may not add up to 100% due to rounding.



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*See label for a complete list of pests controlled.



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/// continued from page 50

Private equity, however, is no foreign player in the skilled trades these days. PE firms across the country have been scooping up home services like HVAC—that is, heating, ventilation and air conditioning—as well as plumbing and electrical companies. They hope to profit by running larger, more profitable operations.

Their growth marks a major shift, taking home-services firms away from family operators by offering mom-and-pop shops seven-figure and eight-figure paydays. It is a contrast from previous generations, when more owners handed companies down to their children or employees.

The wave of investment is minting a new class of millionaires across the country, one that small-business owners say is helping add more shine to working with a tool belt.

“You don’t need to go to Silicon Valley to have a successful career and entrepreneurial opportunities,” says Brian Russel, a partner at the Detroit-based Huron Capital, which focuses on investments in service companies.

THE PAYDAYS. If you live in a big metro area, chances are one of the service trucks you have seen drive by has recently changed hands. Private-equity investors have purchased nearly 800 HVAC, plumbing and electrical companies since 2022, according to data from PitchBook. And those are just the biggest deals—plenty of smaller-scale purchases aren’t tracked, and sellers are reluctant to share exact details about their PE payouts.

“Everybody and their uncle owns an HVAC business in the private-equity space today,” says Adam Hanover, chairman of Redwood Services. The PE-backed home-services company bought Aaron Rice’s business in 2022 and merged it with Rite Way, a larger Tucson-based HVAC operation that Redwood acquired the year before.

Redwood has acquired 35 companies



PE investors have purchased nearly 800 HVAC, plumbing and electrical companies since 2022.

in the past four years. They range from smaller outfits (such as Rice’s), which Redwood says it buys outright for an average of \$1 million, to more sizable companies (such as Rite Way), with an average valuation around \$20 million, in which it takes majority stakes.

The trades have long offered solid hourly wages for workers without college degrees. They are also springboards for those with bigger entrepreneurial ambitions.

In Rice’s case, he struggled with addiction and had spent five years in prison for selling meth before co-founding his plumbing business in 2012 with his business partner, Mike Nagal. It specialized in

sewer inspections and repair. At the time that they sold the company, it had 18 employees and was bringing in about \$3 million in revenue a year.

Though the duo hadn’t planned to sell, they liked the fact that the company would become part of Rite Way, another local outfit, and that Redwood wanted owners to continue holding a stake and have a major say in management.

Rice continues to work as a sewer department manager at Rite Way, and plans to stay with the company until he retires in seven years at age 50—something he’s looking forward to. His co-founder has remained with the company, too.

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"I want to hunt, fish, drink beer and cook meat," Rice says, adding that selling his company has given him greater peace of mind for his family.

For private-equity investors, the strategy is one that has been put to use in industries as varied as carwashes and nursing homes: Roll up businesses to create larger players and improve their margins by adding managerial know-how, back-office efficiency and beefed-up marketing and recruiting budgets. Critics of the PE model say that it can mean higher prices for consumers and less competition, but others say it can improve service quality and boost the bottom line.

BUILDING AN EMPIRE. New ownership has paid off for Rite Way. Under Redwood, the company has gone from \$30 million in annual revenue to around \$70 million.

Along the way, Rite Way acquired companies to expand beyond HVAC, with plumbing and electrical services. More capital helps it tap a wider customer base. It also helped add dozens of additional service trucks, increased head count, started an apprenticeship program to train new workers and increased sales training for technicians. Redwood also brought in accountants to scrutinize the bottom line.

Small-business owners are often too busy to juggle such an array of tasks, or they charge prices that are years out of date, says Richard Lewis, chief executive of Redwood Services. Redwood's home-services businesses examine their prices on a quarterly basis to ensure they are in line with the market.

If the cost of a screw goes up, it gets passed on to the customer, Lewis adds. "It's taken a lot of stress out of the business," says Rick Walter, Rite Way's former owner. Walter, 67, retains a 25% stake in the company and has agreed to stay on as president for a few more years. After that, he plans to enjoy his retirement with his wife and family—and their Colorado vacation home purchased with proceeds from his company's sale.

"This business has been 60 to 70 hours a week for years," Walter says. "I'd be out till 9 or 10 p.m., selling heating and cooling systems, and she stood behind me the whole time."

A decade ago, nine out of 10 small-business owners in the skilled trades looking for a buyout wanted to retire and be done, says Ted Polk, a managing director at Capstone Partners, a Boston-based investment banking firm. These days, a growing number of them don't want to ride off into the sunset. Around a third are entrepreneurs who want to stay with the company and find ways to grow.

"They see what they can do on their own is a fraction of what they could if they had somebody behind them, saying, 'I'll help you buy these guys and those guys,'" says Polk, who has done deals in the skilled trades ranging from \$30 million to more than \$200 million. "Next thing you know, you're running an empire."

Workers benefit financially, too, says Graham Weaver, founder of private-equity firm Alpine Investors, based in San Francisco.

Alpine, an early investor in HVAC companies, says technicians at the HVAC businesses it acquires get a 20% pay bump in the first year after a company is sold, mostly through a combination of higher wages, bonuses and commission.

The company has rolled up more than 200 companies across 43 states into a larger service platform, Apex, which did a combined \$2.2 billion in business in the past year.

Given the surging investor interest, Weaver says, anyone with entrepreneurial ambitions should take a second look at the trades, which offer steady income via unclogging toilets, fixing boilers and installing new air-conditioning units.

"You can build a business that's going to be worth \$10-30 million and have a ready list of buyers to sell it to," he says. "Ten years ago, there was no one to sell it to."

Still, some workers say that when private equity buys up their companies, they

wind up pushing new systems on customers, rather than simply fixing what's not working. The pressure to make sales is less satisfying than doing real repair work, some sounding off in online forums say.

GRIT AND THE AMERICAN DREAM.

Selling can also be bittersweet. Dana Spears co-founded an HVAC company in Land O'Lakes, Fla., in 2006, later buying it outright in 2008, when it had 14 employees, leaving her with \$4,000 in the bank.

When Covid hit, outside investors woke up to the importance of essential businesses like hers.

More than 100 offers to buy the company have poured in since 2020. Spears, 51, resisted selling because she worried about her 100 employees.

"I have employees who've worked for me for 16 years," she says. "I don't want this to be an overnight flip and they don't have a job."

But around her, private equity was buying her peer companies, and she felt outgunned.

Her newly acquired competitors could negotiate better pricing and deals on everything from equipment to workers' health insurance. With larger fleets, they could offer faster response times and higher wages, too.

Earlier this year, after much deliberation and meeting with numerous buyers, she settled on a firm she felt she could trust, P1 Service Group.

Exiting the business was a wrenching decision, but the opportunity also felt too good to pass up, says Spears, who declined to disclose how much the company sold for.

She is taking a year off to spend with her family, and is already thinking of founding another home-services business.

"It's like we're finally seen and recognized," Spears says. "The trades are one of the businesses that, if you have the grit, you can go and do the American dream." ■

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Why Private Equity Loves Pest Control

Much like HVAC businesses, pest control companies align nicely with investment strategies used by today's private equity firms.

By Kemp Anderson

In recent years, the pest control industry has experienced remarkable growth, positioning itself as a lucrative field for entrepreneurs and business owners. With increasing public awareness about health and hygiene, coupled with the rising prevalence of pests due to urbanization and climate change, the demand for professional pest control services has surged.

This burgeoning market offers substantial opportunities for those looking to establish or expand their businesses in the sector. Private equity (PE) firms realize these facts — and many others — and that is why they are targeting this industry.

NEXT MILLIONAIRE CLASS? The recent *Wall Street Journal* article “America’s New Millionaire Class: Plumbers and HVAC Entrepreneurs” (see page 50) discussed why these businesses are attractive to PE. Similarly, according to data from PitchBook, private equity investors “have purchased nearly 800 HVAC, plumbing and electrical companies since 2022” and the pest control industry could see similar consolidation.

You might ask, how can this happen? The answer is that a PE firm raises capital from investors and serves as an investment company that buys stakes in private companies and increases their value by consolidating them and re-trading or



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selling them. There are more than 4,500 PE firms with over 18,000 PE funds in the U.S., and with more than \$4.4 trillion in assets, they are industry-agnostic.

MARKET GROWTH & ECONOMICS.

The pest control industry has demonstrated consistent expansion during the past decade. In 2022, the global pest control market was valued at about \$24.6 billion and is projected by some to reach \$42.5 billion by 2035, exhibiting a compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of 5.7%.

These numbers move based on the source — however, the projections seem achievable and the CAGR seems accurate. Growth is driven by factors such as increased urbanization — which creates conducive environments for pests and heightened awareness of the health risks associated with infestations, as well as macroeconomic factors such as interest rates, inflationary pressures to consumers and political stability. This robust market presence underscores the essential nature of pest control services in both residential and commercial sectors.

ATTRACTIVE INDUSTRY. PE firms have increasingly turned their attention to pest control, drawn by several factors that align with their investment strategies:

Recurring Revenue Models. Pest control services often operate on subscription-based models, providing consistent and predictable income streams. This financial stability is particularly appealing to PE investors seeking reliable returns.

Economic Resilience. The demand for pest control remains steady regardless of economic fluctuations, as both residential and commercial clients require these services to maintain health and safety standards. This resilience makes the industry a safe harbor during economic downturns.

Fragmented Market. With over 17,000 pest management firms in the U.S. gen-



erating approximately \$12.654 billion in annual revenue, the industry is highly fragmented. This presents ample opportunities for consolidation, allowing PE firms to acquire smaller companies and integrate them into larger platforms, achieving economies of scale and expanded market reach.

CURRENT INVOLVEMENT. The pest control sector has seen a notable increase in PE activity. In 2023, PE deal volume in the industry rose by 18.8% year over year, contrasting with a 20.7% decline in PE activity across the broader middle market.

According to Capstone Partners, this surge indicates a growing interest and confidence among PE firms in the pest control space. This can be seen through several PE-backed entities that have been consolidating the market.

St. Louis-based PestCo, for example, has acquired 16 regional and local pest control companies since its inception in 2021, rapidly expanding its footprint. According to PE Hub, other PE firms have made significant investments, such as Citation Capital's acquisition of a majority stake in Aptive Environmental, a prominent residential pest control provider. Others include Imperial Capital, Levine Leichtman, Thompson Street, Concentric, Dubin Clark, Access Holdings and several others.

While the exact number of PE firms cur-

rently invested in the pest control industry is fluid and continually evolving due to ongoing mergers and acquisitions, the trend of increasing PE involvement is clear.

The combination of stable, recurring revenues, economic resilience and a fragmented market ripe for consolidation continues to attract private equity interest, suggesting sustained investment activity in the foreseeable future.

DYNAMIC LANDSCAPE. The PE landscape in the U.S. is both expansive and dynamic, characterized by a significant number of firms, a multitude of investment funds and substantial assets under management.

The number of combined firms in the U.S. as of 2024, the combined category of private equity, hedge funds and investment vehicles encompass approximately 11,273 businesses in the U.S., with roughly 4,500 of those combined categories being unique PE firms. According to IBISWorld, this figure reflects a 0.5% increase from the previous year, despite an average annual decline of 1.9% over the preceding five years.

PE GRANULARITIES. PE has seen a significant proliferation of investment funds. As of 2020, there were over 18,000 PE funds, marking nearly a 60% increase over the preceding five years. This growth in-

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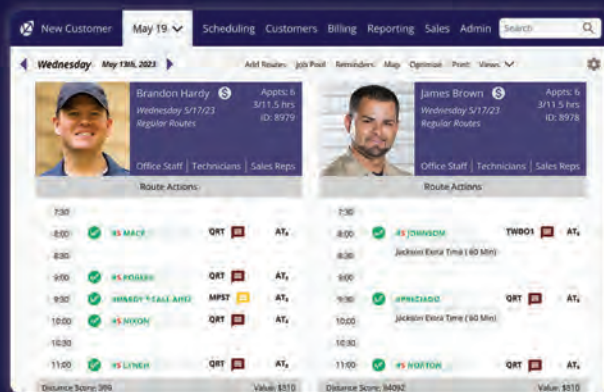


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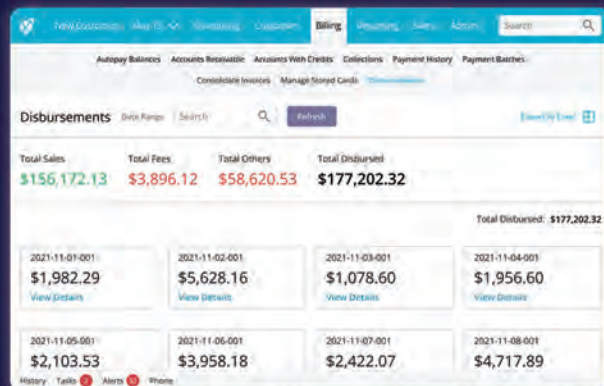
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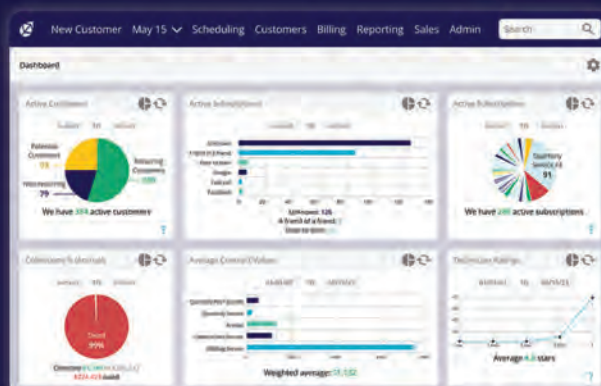


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dicates a robust expansion in investment vehicles, offering a diverse array of opportunities for investors.

In terms of assets under management, the PE industry held approximately \$4.4 trillion as of 2020, with \$1 trillion of this amount constituting uninvested capital, commonly referred to as “dry powder.” Notably, leading firms have achieved remarkable milestones; for instance, Blackstone’s total assets under management surpassed \$1 trillion in 2024, underscoring the significant scale of top industry players.

Consider that PE firms employ 11.7 million people in today’s market. The sector’s continuous growth in the U.S. reflects its pivotal role in the broader financial ecosystem, driving investment across various industries and contributing to economic development.

HOW THEY DO IT. PE firms use a roll-up strategy to acquire multiple smaller businesses within a fragmented industry, integrate them into a single, larger entity and increase their value for a profitable exit. This approach allows PE firms to create market-leading companies that attract higher valuations and larger buyers. Here’s how they do it:

Industry Selection & Platform Investment. PE firms look for industries with fragmentation, categorized by numerous small, independent businesses with no dominant players; recurring revenue; businesses with consistent demand (like pest control, HVAC or healthcare); high profit potential, low capital requirements or pricing power; and platform businesses, meaning the PE firm starts by purchasing a well-run business with good infrastructure and leadership.

In the pest control industry, a typical platform is generically defined as having \$10 million in recurring revenue at a minimum. This definition can change from buyer to buyer. A platform business serves as the foundation for acquiring and integrating additional businesses.

Acquiring & Integrating. Once the platform company is in place, the PE firm aggressively buys smaller competitors called tuck-ins, add-ons or bolt-ons to scale up around the platform. Key integration strategies include:

- Streamlining operations: Standardizing processes, technology and customer service.
- Finding cost synergies: Reducing overhead by centralizing functions like HR, finance and marketing.
- Using supply chain and purchasing power: Bulk buying reduces costs, improving margins. The bigger they get the more the PE firm can control the supply chain — buy at a discount, increasing profit margin.
- Branding & market expansion: growing reach under a brand/regional presence.

Driving Growth & Enterprise Value. To drive growth and profitability, the company focuses on several strategies. First, it seeks to boost margins by eliminating inefficiencies and enhancing pricing power. Expanding market share also is a priority achieved through buying out competitors to dominate the market. The company also invests in technology by upgrading software, automation and analytics to improve operational efficiency. Lastly, hiring strong leadership is crucial. Experienced executives are hired to drive performance and steer the company toward success.

Selling at Higher Valuations. After three to seven years, the PE firm looks for a profitable exit. The company has several exit strategies to consider. One option is to sell to a larger PE firm through a secondary buyout, allowing a bigger PE firm to scale it further. Another possibility is selling to a strategic buyer, which would involve a corporation within the same industry purchasing the business to expand its own operations. Lastly, the company could take the business public through an initial public offering (IPO), offering stock market shares for a high return.

WHY IT WORKS FOR PE FIRMS. PE firms buy small, fragmented businesses at lower valuations, consolidate them into a larger company and sell at a premium, increasing profitability through efficiencies and growth, while leveraging debt financing to boost returns and magnify investment gains, making the company more attractive to buyers. This strategy is why industries like pest control, HVAC, healthcare services and home services have seen massive PE-driven consolidation — turning small businesses into multi-billion-dollar industry leaders.

It is about the bottom line. PE firms view the pest control industry strengths with fragmentation, recurring revenue and high profits as a target-rich environment that checks boxes for their investors.

The investors put in money — usually millions per investor, and then sit back and wait a few years. The reward is typically a return that is much stronger than investing in the stock market or other opportunities.

So, if you have been wondering why your phone won’t stop ringing, you’re receiving several emails per week and maybe even an international cold call, this is why.

It is hard to imagine this stopping anytime soon. Remember the referenced article, “America’s New Millionaire Class: Plumbers and HVAC Entrepreneurs,” because if PE firms have trillions to invest and have rolled up 800 HVAC, plumbing and electrical companies since 2022, it can happen to the pest control space.

PE firms are industry-agnostic investment firms, highly educated, highly disciplined and incredibly experienced at buying businesses regardless of industry. They are very versed at buying low and selling high.

My advice is to make sure you have the proper team in place before sitting at the table. Going in this process alone can cost you millions. ▀

The author is founder/president of Kemp Anderson Consulting (kempanderson.com).



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Rollins' Northwest Expansion

Editor's note: Rollins' purchase of Sæla closed on April 2. Thus, the acquisition is not reflected in Rollins' revenues in this Top 100 issue. Sæla is included on this year's list, which is based on 2024 revenues.

Rollins acquired Sæla Pest Control, a \$65 million company with a strong presence in the Pacific Northwest.

By Brad Harbison and Jodi Dorsch

Rollins, on April 2, acquired Orem, Utah-based Sæla Pest Control, a \$65 million company with 18 offices throughout the U.S.

"The acquisition of Sæla will accelerate our long-term growth strategy and expand our presence in key geographies, including the Pacific Northwest, Mountain West and Midwestern United States," said Jerry Gahlhoff, president and CEO of Rollins, who added that Sæla will continue to operate as a standalone brand.

Sæla was founded in 2008 by CEO Andrew Richardson, and the company originally operated under the name Edge Pest Control. In 2022, Richardson changed the

company's name to Sæla, which means "happiness" in Old Norse. Sæla has grown rapidly since its founding in 2008, employing more than 250 team members and ranking #22 on this year's PCT Top 100.

A key accelerator in Sæla's growth is its use of door-to-door (D2D) sales professionals. For Rollins, the acquisition of Sæla marks the second time in the last two years they have purchased a large residential firm built on D2D sales. In 2023, Rollins acquired Fox Pest Control, Logan, Utah, a \$100 million firm whose rapid growth also was spurred by D2D sales.

Gahlhoff said that Rollins' experience acquiring Fox helped with this transaction, but he does not expect much service territory overlapping. "[Sæla] is a really dominant player in Colorado and the Pacific Northwest," Gahlhoff told PCT. "They're a pretty good size in the Kansas City area as well. So those are not places that Fox went — not markets that Fox played in."

Sometimes, there are concerns with

D2D companies not being strong with customer retention, but Gahlhoff said he's been impressed with Sæla's focus on retention, as well as its use of metrics such as Net Promoter Scores. "They're doing a lot of the same things fundamentally that we do...they're not just a sales and marketing company," he said. "They are truly a service company and over the years I got to know them well enough to know how they were. That's really what made me comfortable."

For Richardson, the decision to sell was bittersweet; it marked the end of a journey that began 16½ years ago. He told PCT he hadn't intended to sell and was focused on building a company rooted in excellence, prioritizing people over profit. About two years ago, Richardson met with his financial adviser, Paul Giannamore, The Potomac Company, to take stock of his company, discuss the market and see where valuations were at, but "ultimately, it wasn't just about the highest bidder,"

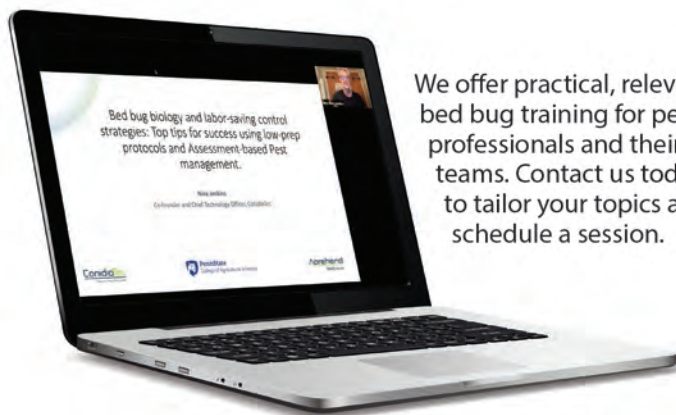


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Richardson said. “We wanted to partner with a company that shared our values. I never really thought about legacy before, but the partner we chose in Rollins made a lot of sense because they align with our cultural values and can continue supporting our employees.”

In addition to Richardson, who was majority owner, Saela had minority owners in Blaine Richardson (Andrew’s brother) and Daniel O’Donnal, and the company has been led by COO Mitch Smith the last 18 months. Prior to joining Saela eight years ago, Smith spent nearly two decades at Rollins and has known Gahlhoff for 23 years, dating back to their days at HomeTeam Pest Defense.

“When you spend enough time in business with people, you get to know their values, how they think and what’s important to them,” Smith said. “Andrew built

this company with the same focus on taking care of people, and I’ve seen firsthand how Rollins operates. They understand that the foundation of a successful organization is its people. If Andrew felt that this was the right path for continued growth and providing opportunities for the team, then it made perfect sense.”

Smith, along with the Richardsons and O’Donnal, has been working through the transition process, including creating action plans, preparing the company for change, communicating with employees and managing due diligence. Post-acquisition, Smith is continuing to work closely with Jeff Ward, Saela’s vice president of operations, and Korey Horlacher,



Jerry Gahlhoff

Saela’s director of operational sales. “The organizational structure won’t change,” he said.

Richardson said that he and his brother, along with O’Donnal, will be staying with Saela in the short term, to “ensure a smooth transition and to ensure [Smith] has the

support he needs to succeed.” As for his future, Richardson said it is to be determined, but he has no plans to retire. “That sounds boring to me. I’m figuring out my next steps, but I’ll definitely remain engaged in some capacity. I just don’t know exactly what yet.” ▀

The authors are senior news editor and publisher of PCT magazine.

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Understanding the Need for Innovation in Termite Detection

Termites are a persistent challenge in both residential and commercial properties. Often operating out of sight, their presence may go unnoticed until costly damage is already done. Over the years, pest control professionals have developed various strategies to locate and treat infestations, some of which remain effective, while others are evolving with the times.

As buildings become more complex and client expectations grow, many in the pest management industry are turning to technology driven solutions to complement their expertise and improve the overall inspection process

The Role of Technology in Today's Termite Inspections

Advancements in detection technology are making it easier to identify termite activity early, accurately, and with minimal disruption to the property. New tools offer capabilities that extend far beyond traditional inspections, bringing together multiple forms of data for a more complete picture of what's happening behind walls, beneath floors, or inside ceilings.

Introducing the Termatrac iTraker Pro

A standout in this new era of termite technology is the Termatrac iTraker Pro, a multi-functional inspection tool that combines several key features into one compact and easy-to-use device.

Key Capabilities of the iTraker Pro:

- **Thermal Imaging Camera:** Helps identify thermal anomalies associated with termite nests or other hidden pest issues.
- **Radar Movement Detection:** Tracks pest activity behind walls and other surfaces, without the need for drilling or invasive procedures.
- **Advanced Moisture Detection:** Offers both direct and relative moisture readings to identify conditions that may support infestations.
- **Real-Time Data & Reporting:** Automatically gathers inspection data and generates detailed reports to share with clients or team members.
- **Ergonomic, User-Friendly Design:** Built with efficiency in mind, making it ideal for busy professionals working in the field.

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- **Precision & Accuracy:** Using advanced sensors like radar, moisture, temperature, and thermal imaging, the iTraker Pro reliably detects termite and other pest activity with greater accuracy, helping to reduce misdiagnoses and improve inspection confidence.
- **Real-Time Monitoring:** Pest professionals can monitor termites and other pest activity in real time, allowing for quicker responses and better-informed treatment strategies.
- **Non-Invasive Detection:** Unlike traditional methods that require invasive inspections, the iTraker Pro offers a non-destructive solution, minimizing disruption to property owners.
- **Data Logging & Reporting:** The device records and stores detection data, helping professionals track trends, generate reports, and provide evidence-based recommendations to clients.
- **Strong Performance in Field Trials:** Field trials of the iTraker Pro resulted in an **impressive 80% closing rate**, highlighting its effectiveness in identifying termite activity and supporting successful pest control outcomes.

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Man of the Hour

Cook's Pest Control's Brandon Martin used his first responder CPR training to save the life of an elderly woman during a quarterly pest control service visit.

By Amanda Joerndt



Brandon Martin

What started out as a normal day working in the field for Cook's Pest Control service technician Brandon Martin quickly turned into a life-saving encounter for a customer.

As Martin was servicing a home in Gadsden, Ala., an elderly woman collapsed in front of him. "It's like somebody just flipped a light switch in her," he said. "She passed out and hit the floor."

He jumped into action and performed CPR, ultimately saving her life.

"I thought she had just fallen, but before I realized it, she wasn't responsive to pain," Martin said. "I did a sternum rub on her at first to [illicit] a pain response to see if she was still semi-conscious at best, and there was no response from her."

Martin started performing CPR on her while also calling 911. "I started pushing on her with one hand, and she was able to regain consciousness and that's when the fire department showed up," he said.

Martin later learned the woman had a medical condition that caused the episode, and this ailment is now being controlled by new medications. Martin credits his quick-thinking skills to the training he received in law enforcement prior to his job at Cook's. As a former first responder, Martin said his body has become "so desensitized to high-adrenaline situations because they happened so often in law en-

forcement," that now when an emergency arises in life, he said he is able to "stop thinking and let his [training] take over."

Before the medical emergency, Martin was talking with the woman about the three months that had passed since his last visit. He said being able to have personal relationships with customers and open communication creates a stronger bond if an emergency situation happens. "Communication skills are key. That's the biggest thing I took away from law enforcement: knowing how to talk to people and that translates into staying calm under pressure because you can't help someone if you're also freaking out," Martin said. "If you talk to your customers like you have been friends for years, it's going to get you really far, not only [in] their graces, but within the company as well."

Martin urges his team members and other pest management professionals to be observant and vigilant of their surroundings when treating homes for their own — as well as their customers' — safety.

"Cook's services thousands of people a day, and every time we service an account, there is a chance that something like this can happen that would require emergency services, so having people who know the basics of CPR could save a life," he said. ▀

The author is digital editor of PCT.



To watch the full video interview with Martin, visit bit.ly/4j2uhui.

Business succession planning

BY THE NUMBERS

Starting to think about stepping away from your business but not sure how to go about it? You're not alone – read on for some key stats to know as you begin the journey towards an exit or retirement!

SPOILER ALERT:

Planning for a transition can be hard (and scary!)

58%

of small business owners do not have a succession plan in place



78%

of business owners say they find the process of succession planning overwhelming and don't know where to start

HELP IS ON THE WAY:

A professional advisor comes with several benefits

Companies that use a designated M&A advisor on average sell for **20%+** more than those that go it alone, and greatly reduce the risk of a deal falling through



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A fully committed advisor can save a business owner over **1,000 hours** of work in preparing for and executing a sale

BUSINESS IS BOOMING:

P/E activity in the space projected to continue growing

The pest control industry was estimated at **\$24.6B** in 2022, and could reach **\$40B+** in the following 10 years (GorillaDesk)

\$40B+



Private equity activity increase **18.8%** from 2022 to 2023, even as interest rates reduced P/E activity overall (Capstone)



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News & Notes

From recent mergers to new hires and anniversaries, here's a round-up of news from Top 100 firms.

American Pest Celebrates 100 Years

American Pest, an Anticimex company (No. 4 on this year's list), is celebrating 100 years in business this year, marking a century of pest prevention services offered throughout the local Maryland, Virginia and Washington, D.C., regions.



"We are grateful to our long-standing customers and dedicated employees for getting us to this milestone," said Kevin Poland, president of American Pest. "We attribute this centennial celebration to our ongoing commitment to trust, innovation and accountability, which are the pillars of our success."

The company was originally founded in 1925 as an American Disinfectant Company with the philosophy of offering prompt and courteous service at a fair price, according to American Pest.

The pest control company credits its success to its team of more than 400 trained pest professionals, including two Ph.D. entomologists, 10 associate certified entomologists (A.C.E.) and more than 30 state-certified technicians.

American Pest launched its year-long celebration by hosting an all-employee kickoff event and award ceremony on Jan. 30. The company is using the milestone to reintroduce its brand with a refreshed logo and new trucks. It plans to launch a series of corporate social responsibility efforts through its AP Cares initiative.

Knox, Fortson Inducted into S.C. Business HOF

Junior Achievement of Greater South Carolina recently announced the induction of Lex Knox and Tommy Fortson into the South Carolina Business Hall of Fame. Junior Achievement noted that as business leaders at Terminix Service (No. 11 on this year's list), Knox, chairman of the board and CEO, and Fortson, vice chairman, have demonstrated exceptional integrity, leadership and commitment to their communities.



Tommy Fortson (left) and Lex Knox were inducted into the S.C. Business Hall of Fame.

Established in 1985 by Junior Achievement and The State newspaper, the South Carolina Business Hall of Fame honors champions of free enterprise and showcases business role models for students in grades K-12. Induction as a laureate is a lifetime achievement award recognizing individuals who have made a lasting, positive impact on the state's economic and business landscape.

Knox has built a career in ethical business practices and corporate responsibility at Terminix Service. His leadership has fostered economic growth and improved the

lives of employees and the broader community. Throughout his career, Fortson has served his state in various capacities, including the pesticide advisory board, regulatory review committee, chairman of Clemson University's agriculture and public service advisory board, and president of the South Carolina Pest Management Association.

Abell Named One of Canada's Best Workplaces in 2025

Abell Pest Control (No. 17 on this year's list), announced that the company has ranked in the top 100 of Canada's Best Workplaces for the third consecutive year in the 100-999 employees category.

"We've built a strong culture at Abell by placing a high value on our team members," said Sara Cromwell, vice president, people excellence, Abell Pest Control. "When team members are supported, respected and optimistic about their future with us, their enthusiasm naturally extends to their work and the customers we serve. This recognition underscores how deeply our culture is rooted in supporting our team members to achieve excellence."

The Trust Index used to score companies evaluates key factors such as trust in leadership, camaraderie among colleagues and loyalty to the company, while also considering the diversity of responses across demographics to show how Abell



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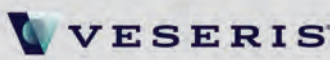
The new AwareX by Tactacam app offers API integration for seamless data sharing, enhancing communication between systems, tracking services, and real-time updates to improve operations and customer service.

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TOP 10 THINGS TO KNOW

In 2025, the Sentricon® system celebrates 30 years of protecting homes, businesses and other structures from termites. Here are 10 things you need to know about the history and evolution of the Sentricon system:

1 Sentricon Was the First Commercially Available Baiting System:

When it was introduced in 1995, Sentricon gave customers and the industry a valuable alternative to invasive and labor-intensive liquid treatments.

2 The Original Sentricon System Won the Presidential Green Chemistry Challenge Award:

In 2000, Sentricon was recognized for replacing “extensively applied termiticides in soil around houses and other structures,” reducing “the use of hazardous materials,” and reducing “potential impacts on human health and the environment.”

3 Sentricon Uses the Termites’ Own Biology Against Them:

As worker termites leave pheromone trails that lead back to the undetectable Recruit HD bait, foragers continue to feed on the bait and bring it back to the colony.

4 The Sentricon Bait Matrix Only Gets Better With Age:

The patented Always Active™ formulation allows the bait matrix to stand up to extended exposure to subsoil environments, helping reduce the labor required for monitoring and



maintenance while also offering a more convenient experience for customers.

5 Sentricon is Field- and Research-Proven:

Field tests by the U.S. Department of Agriculture’s Forest Service, and research by at least 30 universities and external research contractors, prove the ability of Sentricon to completely eliminate termite colonies.

6 Our Research Has Helped Advance the Industry:

From Dr. Nan-Yao Su’s discovery of termite “self-recruitment” to the evolution of the Sentricon bait matrix and active ingredient, our research has helped advance the industry’s understanding of termite behavior and control.

7 Sentricon Opened the Door for Preventive Termite Services:

Thanks to the proprietary bait matrix with Always Active technology, Sentricon stations can stay in place for a year or more, helping protect homes and structures from foraging termites.

8 Sentricon Helps Enable Bundled Sales:

Bundling Sentricon with general pest control helps Certified Sentricon Specialists® boost their revenue by offering a more complete range of services and offers a more convenient pest control experience for homeowners.

9 Sentricon Has the Highest Retention Rate in Termite Protection:

More than nine out of 10 termite control customers choose to stick with Sentricon, giving Certified Sentricon Specialists a more dependable cash flow.

10 Sentricon is the No. 1 Brand in Termite Control:

Millions of homes, businesses, historical buildings and other structures are protected by Sentricon. Why? Simple. Sentricon is THE standalone solution to tough termite problems.

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stands out for its inclusivity and equitable culture.

Ninety-four percent of Abell team members feel they are contributing to the company's objectives, reflecting a high level of engagement and a strong connection to success, the company said. Also, 89% of team members report a strong sense of belonging, highlighting Abell's commitment to cultivating teams that people are eager to be a part of, the company said.

Certus Promotes Rezk to CMO

Certus Pest (No. 19 on this year's list) promoted Juan Rezk to chief marketing officer. Rezk will lead Certus' integrated marketing strategies, including many first-impression touchstones current and future customers will see.

Rezk joined Certus in 2023 as senior vice president of marketing. He helped



Juan C. Rezk

elevate the company's brand guidelines while implementing blueprints to improve the collective websites, social media channels, lead generation, e-commerce growth, and search engine rankings, among other strategic omnichannel marketing endeavors.



BUYING IN: PMPs BEING APPROACHED BY PRIVATE EQUITY

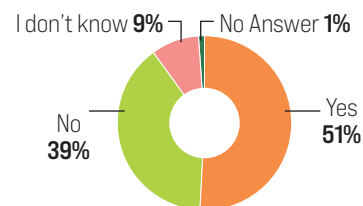
Earlier this year, PCT surveyed its readers about whether they had been approached to sell their companies and, if so, by what kind of buyer.

Of those polled, 51% of respondents had been approached to sell. Additionally, of those who had been reached out to with such an offer, 50% were initiated by a private equity firm.

Interestingly, the other types of businesses reaching out to PMPs regarding acquisitions included those owned by a parent company/publicly traded business (41%), an independent/family-owned business (38%), a franchise (30%) and/or another type of business (4%).

TO SELL OR NOT TO SELL

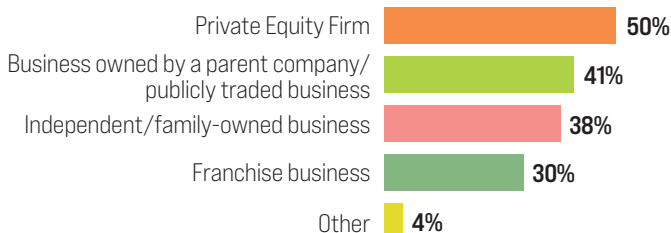
Have you been approached to sell your company in the past three years?



Source: Readex Research; Number of Respondents: 261

THE POTENTIAL BUYERS

What type(s) of business approached you to buy your firm?



Source: Readex Research; Number of Respondents: 133; Respondents could choose more than one response.

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JOSEPH LATINO,
President,
Allergy Technologies



5 QUESTIONS WITH JOSEPH LATINO

Pests are a persistent problem in affordable housing communities, but taking a comprehensive and forward-looking approach can greatly reduce reinfestations and callbacks. Here is some advice from Joseph Latino, president of Allergy Technologies, creator of ATAHC™, the only property-wide, prevention-based, sustainable program for pest control in affordable housing environments.

1 How can you determine whether pests originate from within the property or are repeatedly introduced from outside sources?

Through thorough inspections, identify signs of pest presence and degree of reproductive activity, paying extra attention to anywhere you suspect pests might hide. Check surrounding areas for possible external sources of pests (e.g., garbage bins, neighboring properties with infestations) and analyze patterns of pest sightings. Look at potential introductory points and investigate conducive conditions to see if pests are merely seeking food or shelter.

2 What are the key factors to consider when identifying which pests are infesting a property?

Look for physical evidence that can help pinpoint the type of pest. Observe where and when the pests are most active. Certain areas, like basements or kitchens, might indicate specific pests such as rodents or cockroaches.

Examine environmental conditions, like warmth, moisture, or food sources within the property that may attract pests. Review previous pest issues to identify persistent vulnerabilities.

3 Which external environmental factors can PMPs observe to help affordable housing clients prevent infestations?

Check for improperly stored waste or overflowing, uncovered dumpsters. Assess nearby greenery that might provide shelter or pathways for pests to enter properties. Look for stagnant water sources. Identify structural vulnerabilities, like cracks in walls, damaged roofing or unsealed openings, which can serve as pest entry points. Consider nearby properties or natural areas that may contribute to recurring infestations.

4 How can PMPs address and avoid being blamed when various other factors contribute to infestations?

Use visuals. Educate clients by explaining

the imperative role of exclusion and sanitation in preventing infestations. Conduct detailed property inspections and provide reports that document contributing factors. Share specific, actionable steps clients can take and measure to reduce pest risks. Leverage data and evidence to demonstrate to clients the environmental or structural conditions that are aiding infestations. Shift the focus from blame to addressing the root causes. Schedule regular follow-ups.

5 How do you effectively convey the actions customers need to take to address these issues?

Clearly outline the steps customers need to take. Share real-life scenarios that help customers relate to the importance of their actions in preventing infestations. Check in periodically to offer additional support or clarification and demonstrate your commitment to their success. Emphasize the collaborative effort required between pest control professionals and customers for effective solutions.

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ors, for all the pest control brands under the Certus umbrella.

“Juan’s humble leadership, intelligence and drive to achieve new heights of excellence have been a true differential in the success of Certus Pest,” said Dave Bradford, CEO of Certus Pest. “Juan has taught me more about how marketing and technology impact the acquisition and experience of customers in his last two years at Certus than I’ve learned throughout my career. I am thankful to have him on our team and proud of him for this deserving accomplishment.”

Senske Opens New HQ in Dallas

Senske Family of Companies (No. 10 on this year’s list) announced in April the

grand opening of its new corporate office in the Cypress Waters business development in Coppell, Texas. The company said the new state-of-the-art facility, which has a 10-year lease, is designed to support SFC’s rapid expansion and is able to accommodate as many as 180 employees. “Texas has become a key growth market for us, and this new office is a testament to our vision for the future,” said Casey Taylor, CEO of Senske Family of Companies. “We’re excited to bring more jobs, innovation and high-quality service to the area. Dallas-Fort Worth’s dynamic business environment makes it the perfect place for our continued expansion.”

A grand opening ceremony was held on March 27. ▀



INTERACTIVE TOP 100 MAP

PCT Online’s Top 100 coverage includes an interactive map that shows the locations of each of the headquarters of PCT Top 100 firms, all of the demographic data included on the list and live links to each of the companies’ websites. View the map online at bit.ly/4c4Gcoe.



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Combining knockdown in less than two minutes with long-lasting control, Suspend® Contact & Residual Aerosol is a versatile, cost-effective tool that allows PMPs to outsmart pests like never before. One Envu stakeholder said, "'Ready to go' is a nice way to think about Suspend Contact & Residual Aerosol. It's discreet and convenient, plus you get two products in one — saving our customers time and money."

Here's everything PMPs need to know about Suspend® Contact & Residual Aerosol:

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It's an exciting addition to a product line already at the top of its game. And when utilized in tandem with a product like Suspend® PolyZone® insecticide, PMPs can have an even greater impact.

Suspend® PolyZone® insecticide gives PMPs the power to outlast even their toughest pest challenges, providing up to 90 days of control, thanks

to a polymer barrier that protects the active ingredient even in tough weather conditions and on the most challenging surfaces. By using an advanced solution that offers a more uniform distribution of active ingredient particles, Suspend PolyZone insecticide increases the likelihood of contact with insects that have adapted to avoid treated areas.

remarkably low concentrations, providing fast knockdown with a long residual to keep PMPs outworking all their adversaries. To boot, it has a flexible label that allows application on mattresses, box springs, carpet and upholstery as well as in food service areas.

In the ever-evolving landscape of pest management, adaptability is not



"Suspend PolyZone insecticide is a foundational product for pest management professionals because you can really build an entire program around it," said Chad Noyes, Envu customer marketing manager. "It's a product that you start with and rotate from."

Not to be outdone, Suspend® SC insecticide gives PMPs another impactful, reliable tool for their toolbox. It's an advanced-generation pyrethroid that fights more than 50 pests and works at

just an advantage — it's a necessity. Ants, bed bugs, cockroaches and other pests have proven to be remarkably resilient, evolving strategies to overcome conventional control measures.

By having access to a portfolio of proven, high-impact options on their truck, PMPs have the tools needed to perform routine maintenance applications efficiently and effectively while also mitigating the risk of future pest adaptations.



In All Weather

By leveraging weather as a central factor in business planning and customer engagement, pest control companies can turn productivity and operational challenges into opportunities. **By Justin Bellet**

Editor's note: The author, Justin Bellet, is the new COO of Aruza Pest Control. Prior to joining Aruza, he spent the last 25 years with Truly Nolen Pest Control. In his most recent capacity as COO, he led Truly Nolen's operations through three major storms (Ian, Helene and Milton since 2022 and countless others over the last quarter century) and drafted this story in early 2025 so that other pest control companies could benefit from his experiences.

The pest control industry, like many industries, is intricately tied to the forces of nature. Weather serves as a primary driver of the industry and influences everything from insect pressure to team productivity, safety and, in extreme cases, the very trajectory of a company.

Understanding and preparing for these impacts is not just beneficial—it is essential for long-term success.

THE SEASONAL SURGE. Weather conditions dictate insect populations and behavior. Warm, wet climates typically result in increased insect pressure, as heat and moisture create ideal conditions for breeding and survival. Conversely, cooler, drier seasons often bring a reprieve.

For pest control businesses, this means demand fluctuates significantly, requiring strategic planning to address peak seasons. Proactive monitoring of weather patterns allows businesses to anticipate spikes in calls and allocate resources efficiently.

Drought conditions, however, present a

different challenge. Prolonged dry periods force pests such as termites, ants and rodents to seek moisture and food indoors. Pests are a little harder to find, but they are there. For example, termites may burrow deeper into structures and ants may invade homes in search of water.

Pest control protocols must adapt to these behavioral shifts, requiring innovative treatments and customer education to maintain effectiveness.

CHALLENGES. While weather can drive demand, it also can hinder productivity. Rainy or extreme heat conditions may limit technicians' ability to perform outdoor treatments, delaying services and impacting customer satisfaction. Inclement weather can disrupt routes and create logistical challenges.

We always include monthly time for weather preparation to ensure we are ready for any challenges, requiring businesses to adapt schedules and communicate with customers to maintain trust.

During colder months, parts of our service areas are impacted by icy roads and freezing conditions pose significant risks for technicians. To mitigate these hazards, we adjust start times to allow for safer travel and equip service vehicles with essentials like ice scrapers, sand and proper tires. Regular reminders on safe driving practices help ensure technicians' safety throughout the season.

SAFETY IS THE PRIORITY. The safety of team members is paramount, and weather conditions can pose significant risks. Heatwaves increase the likelihood of heat-related illnesses, while icy or stormy conditions heighten the risk of accidents.

During summer, we equip all service professionals with real-time heat alerts on their devices, prompting actions like hydration breaks, limits on time spent in attics and scheduled cooling periods. Seasonal training ensures that technicians are prepared to recognize and respond to weather-related health risks.

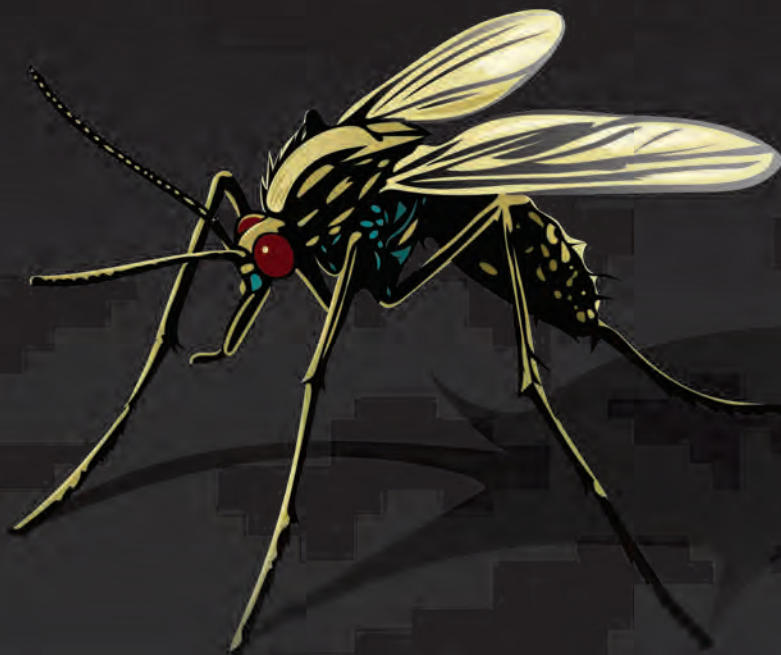
In winter, our protocols shift to address icy roads and freezing temperatures. Adjusting start times and emphasizing vehicle preparedness are key components of our strategy, ensuring our team can safely perform their duties year-round.

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CATASTROPHIC WEATHER EVENTS.

Few things underscore the power of weather more than catastrophic events like hurricanes, floods and wildfires, which can disrupt operations, displace team members and devastate customers.

We go through seasonal preparation to ensure readiness for potential severe weather impacts. When storms are impending, we engage in significant preparation efforts, from readying our branches and vehicles to establishing set communi-

cation protocols. These protocols outline how to communicate, when to communicate and how often to update team members, ensuring safety and clarity during the storm.

In some cases, these events can fundamentally alter the business landscape, forcing companies to reassess and adapt their strategies. The impact of such events can be felt long after the skies clear, requiring resilience and resourcefulness from leadership and teams alike.

Post-hurricane, when there is an impact, we follow a structured process to support our employees and communities. This includes providing employee loans and ensuring that our team members have access to food and shelter.

We then focus on community outreach, including specific efforts to address the increased insect, lawn and rodent issues caused by storms.

We come prepared to support our community with specials designed to keep our people working and not create a hardship for customers in a time of need, as well as efforts to assist first responders, reinforcing our commitment to both our people and the communities we serve.

WEATHER AS A BUSINESS DRIVER.

In the pest control industry, weather is not just a backdrop — it is a strategic driver that shapes every facet of the business. From marketing campaigns to social media content and service offerings, seasonality dictates the priorities and opportunities that drive success.

Tailored Marketing. Weather trends guide what we promote and when. For example, as spring ushers in termite swarming season in the Eastern U.S., we launch campaigns focused on preventive treatments and inspections.

Conversely, as fall approaches and rodents begin seeking shelter indoors, we shift to highlighting exclusion services and proactive solutions. This alignment with seasonality ensures our messaging resonates with customers when they need it most.



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Social Media Engagement. Our social media strategy is similarly driven by weather patterns. During mosquito season, we share tips on reducing standing water to prevent breeding.

In colder months, we provide advice on sealing entry points to keep rodents out.

These timely, actionable insights position us as a trusted resource for pest prevention while driving engagement and brand awareness.

Seasonality-Aligned Service Offerings. Seasonal pest pressures dictate our service focus, ensuring that we meet customer needs effectively.

From targeted termite baiting systems in the spring to rodent exclusion in the winter, we adapt our offerings based on weather-driven pest activity. This agility allows us to stay ahead of customer concerns while capitalizing on seasonal demand.

Data-Driven Decision Making. Behind the scenes, we rely on analytics and weather forecasting to anticipate trends and adjust our strategy.

By understanding the biggest business drivers for each season, we optimize staffing, inventory and sales efforts.

This proactive approach not only improves efficiency but also enhances the customer experience by ensuring we are always prepared to address their concerns.

CUSTOMER COMMUNICATION. Effective communication is key to managing customer expectations and uncovering new opportunities in the pest control industry.

Using tools like HubSpot, we proactively share insights about weather trends and their impact on pest activity, keeping our customers informed and prepared.

For example, as termite swarming sea-

son approaches, we send targeted email campaigns to educate homeowners about the risks and recommend preventive solutions.

Similarly, during periods of increased rodent activity, we use personalized messaging to highlight exclusion services and sanitation tips.

This communication not only builds trust with customers but also creates additional opportunities to offer relevant services.

By leveraging weather as a central factor in business planning and customer engagement, pest control companies can turn challenges into opportunities, ensuring they not only survive but thrive, no matter what the forecast holds. **PCT**

The author, who was Truly Nolen of America COO when he wrote this article, is now COO of Aruza Pest Control.

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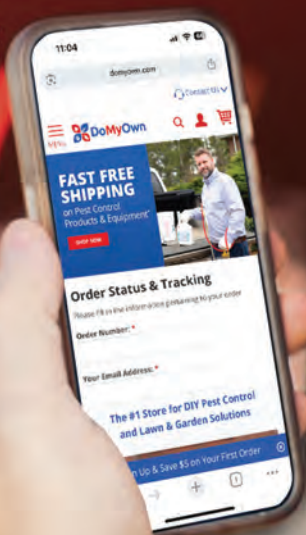
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WHAT MAKES AN ANT, *an Ant?*

At the 2024 Purdue Pest Management Conference, Rose Pest Solutions' Mark VanderWerp shared important ant identification reminders when encountering uncommon species.

By Amanda Joerndt

Identifying an ant isn't too complicated. Key identifiers include a pinched waist with at least one node, elbowed antennae (meaning the first segment is long, often about half the total length and the rest of the segments are short) and hind wings that are smaller than front wings (when present). These are what differentiates ants from other pests, Mark VanderWerp, Rose Pest Solutions' manager of education and training, said at the 2024 Purdue Pest Management Conference.

According to VanderWerp, it's a colony of individuals working together collectively that makes ants unique, adding, "Is there such a thing as a single ant? No, there's a colony associated with every ant that you see. Seeing an ant means there's at least one colony present in the area."

Many pests have broad dietary preferences, he said. Almost any ant in urban situations loves to feed on nectar, meaning showy ornamentals are often terrible for ant management. "Fruit trees are even worse, ants love to hit those peaches if you don't go pick them first. Refined sugars, like the infamous breakroom sugar dish, they're into all of that," he said.

Such foods are common carbohydrate sources. On top of that, there are myriad protein sources that may feed ants around our structures. Removing, or reducing, alternative food sources and nest locations is key to effective treatment. Try to find the worker ants. "Often PMPs find trails of worker ants, slap some bait down and



Ants in glass enclosure in one of the Purdue University entomology labs.

keep going," he said. This works much of the time, but it's always better for control when one knows roughly where the colony is located so that treatments can be placed as close as possible.

VanderWerp said that when talking about repellency with ant control, it isn't akin to what is seen with mosquito repellents. Instead, think about fast versus slow-working insecticides.

Fast treatments include aerosols, some sprayable pyrethroids and neonics. Conversely, slow-working products tend to be baits, IGRs, phenylpyrazoles and pyrroles.

VanderWerp noted it's OK to use some of each when treating because fast treatments will shut down ant pheromone trails and slow options allow more material to get taken back to the colony with the ants.

"Let's imagine the ant problem is inside a structure and you do a treatment around the outside," he said. "What do you think is going to happen? If we see more activ-

ity inside of the structure and less on the outside, a PMP is likely to blame this on repellent chemistry. A homeowner can get upset because they think you pushed them inside. However, this doesn't indicate repellency. What it indicates is that a fast-acting chemistry was used that has shut down the ability of the ants to lay down pheromone trails outside. They are simply dying too quickly."

During the session "4x4 Ants" at the Purdue conference, VanderWerp reviewed four common structural ants PMPs treat in the field and four less common, or emerging, ant pests. This article will focus on the four less commonly encountered ants that VanderWerp discussed: Asian needle ants (*Brachyponera chinensis*), Pharaoh ants (*Monomorium pharaonis*), ghost ants (*Tapinoma melanocephalum*) and citronella ants (*Lasius* spp.).

ASIAN NEEDLE ANTS. This ant has been in the U.S. for 100 years but has only been

making waves since the 2000s. They have a large, single rounded node and are highly skewed toward feeding on protein-rich materials, like other insects. Asian needle ants can sting, inflicting an anaphylactic reaction in some people, making them a medically important pest. They have small colony sizes and are found on the East Coast and in some Midwest states.

Granular baits are currently the best choice for management.

PHARAOH ANTS. *Monomorium pharaonis* are tropically adapted, meaning they mainly infest buildings in the U.S. They build up large colonies and have multiple queens, making them difficult to control. Many reference books warn about their ability to split into multiple colonies by budding if any liquid pesticides are used.

VanderWerp argued that this claim is likely overblown. He shared excerpts from



Mark VanderWerp presented at the 2024 Purdue Pest Management Conference on ant identification tips.

literature showing that budding doesn't always happen. Instead, he said to think about treatments as fast and slow acting. Baits are effective, but residuals can be used to discourage foraging to other, undesired food sources.

GHOST ANTS. This ant species will nest anywhere and will feed on a wide variety of food items. They need to be in warm environments and in the North are often found in zoos and greenhouses.

CITRONELLA ANTS. There are a couple different species of citronella ants. They have a brighter yellow color, small eyes and are considered subterranean. They have a single queen but can still exist in large colonies. If you're hunting for these ants, flip over a rock or dig around compost bins. These ants rarely enter structures except when swarming events occur. However, during swarms, hundreds or thousands of ants may enter a structure. Mechanical removal of swarmers and exclusion methods are the best approaches for managing these ants. **PCT**

The author is digital editor of PCT.

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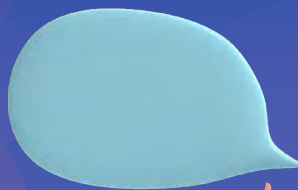
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Clear, meaningful communication can turn a negative situation into a long-term, mutually respectful relationship.

On the Same **Wavelength**

Anyone who has ever been in the field knows what it's like to walk into an account where the customer's own actions — or inaction — are obviously contributing to the pest activity. The overgrown shrubs are flush against the siding, the trash can lid is ajar, the bathroom pipes are leaking and the clutter in the house is out of control. And wait... is that a puddle of grease on the kitchen counter?

While few service technicians would throw their hands up in despair, say, "Nope, not today," and hightail it to their trucks, many grit their teeth and service the account begrudgingly. Maybe they've talked with the customer before with no luck in en-

gaging them to do their part, or this is their first visit and they're uncomfortable bringing these issues to the customer's attention. Instead of talking it over, they instead resign themselves to providing the best service they can, despite knowing they will be back in a few weeks, dealing with the same issues.

Communication training can make all the difference. When each member of a team knows how to engage customers in meaningful dialogue, the culture can transform from one of *blaming* the customer to one of taking *responsibility* for customer cooperation to improve individual and collective performance.

Empower your team with these communication basics and

By Donna DeFranco

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run through a few real-world scenarios to help them fine-tune their approach to even the most difficult conversations.

EXPLAIN CLEARLY. Customers aren't likely to know the jargon of pest management or a specific company, so use plain

language to describe the services being provided and the reasoning behind an approach. Keep things simple, highlighting three main points to be sure the message is easy to grasp. Make sure the customer understands what role *they* need to play in resolving their pest issue as well. Setting

clear expectations is key to building customer trust and confidence in your company.

ACTIVELY LISTEN. Ask the customer questions about the pest activity they're seeing and hearing, the concerns they'd

Tackling a Tough, Yet Common, Conversation

Some conversations between customer and technician are more difficult than others. It's easy to tell a customer you've effectively managed their infestation, for example, but not so easy to tell them you can't fix the problem until they clean up their kitchen.

Elijah Miller, owner of Reign Pest Management in Memphis, Tenn., shared his approach to having this difficult conversation.

"I approach the situation as if it were one of my family members — my mom or dad — and they had an issue they wanted to resolve," he said. "I lead with compassionate understanding. These customers need my help and deserve my respect, not just because they're cus-

tomers but because they're adults. They've worked hard for what they own, their property or business, so I respect that and work to gain their respect in return."

Miller added, "If this is our first meeting, I take pictures, show them what I found and express my concerns in a sensitive way, explaining that sanitation can reduce pest activity significantly, even before any pesticide application. I make a recommendation of what needs to be done, then ask if they may need additional assistance. I have a network of cleaning companies and landscapers I'm happy to recommend, and sometimes I just lend a hand myself. In a case where someone hasn't



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like to share and any questions they may have. Pay careful attention to their responses; customer insights may help you better understand the pest situation, and interest in their perspectives will go a long way in reassuring them that the company has their best interests at heart.

TAILOR YOUR CONVERSATIONS. Get to know your customers with every conversation so that there is a good feeling for the type of approach that may work best with them.

Don't expect Customer A to respond the same way Customer B might to a cir-

cumstance or discussion — people have different priorities, concerns and communication styles.

When you learn to speak their language, you will be able to build a stronger relationship with them and work *with* them, rather than *for* them.

prepped their kitchen for a cockroach treatment, for example, I'll offer to help and then work side-by-side with them to pull dishes out of the cupboards."

Miller said that gaining a customer's trust so that they are more open to recommendations can be as easy as getting to know them.

"Ask how their day is going, what they do for a living, what their pet's name is — questions you'd ask anyone when you first meet," he said. "Showing them that you see them as a fellow human being rather than a person with a pest issue may make them comfortable enough to let their guard down and talk freely. A lot of customers have told me that they know they have this issue and that they need to clean up. I tell them I understand — that I have children, and I know it's hard to

keep up when you're looking after them. When they hear that, they know I'm there to help, not to lecture. No one wants to feel that they're being talked down to or disrespected."

Miller said that business leaders striving to instill strong communication skills in their employees must lead by example. "One of my great employees was actually a customer [first]," he said. "They saw firsthand, in their own house, how I operate — how compassionate I was, how focused I was on helping them, how interested I was in solving their problems and how I communicated with them. They decided this was the kind of company they wanted to work for. Lead by example, hire people who are as compassionate and resourceful as you are and you will build a strong, customer-focused business."



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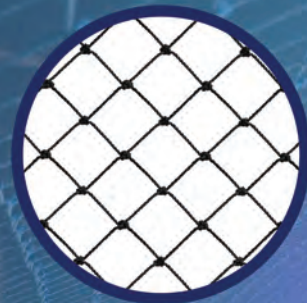
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ADDRESS A CONCERN HEAD-ON.

When a customer expresses frustration or dissatisfaction, take the time to have a meaningful conversation. Show them the company is committed to providing them with only the best service by explaining what services were done, breaking down the experience to see where things may have fallen short of expectations and sharing a path forward to ensure satisfaction.

FOLLOW UP. Once the service is complete, check in with the customer after an appropriate amount of time — long enough for the service to take hold — to make sure the issue has been resolved. If it hasn't been resolved, schedule another visit. Be sure to use the customer's preferred communication method (phone, email, text) so they welcome your outreach. **PCT**

The author is a frequent contributor to PCT.

Setting clear expectations is key to building customer trust and confidence in your company.



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ORPOUCHE:

WAIT, WHAT'D YOU CALL ME?

This 'oldy-but-not-so-goody' virus may join others like West Nile virus and St. Louis encephalitis virus in threatening U.S. health this summer.

By Jennifer R. Gordon

As temperatures warm, no one knows better than a pest management professional (PMP) the creatures that are waiting to put a damper on someone's day.

The joggers who like to take runs near a pond might find themselves running from tiny threats so small their nickname is no-see-ums. The backyard picnic that starts in the day and runs into the night might have to defend the party from an onslaught of tiny vampires as dusk falls. And as anyone encountering biting insects will likely tell you, these critters suck—literally. Luckily for most people in the U.S., that's all these insects will ever be: irritating, frustrating and bothersome.

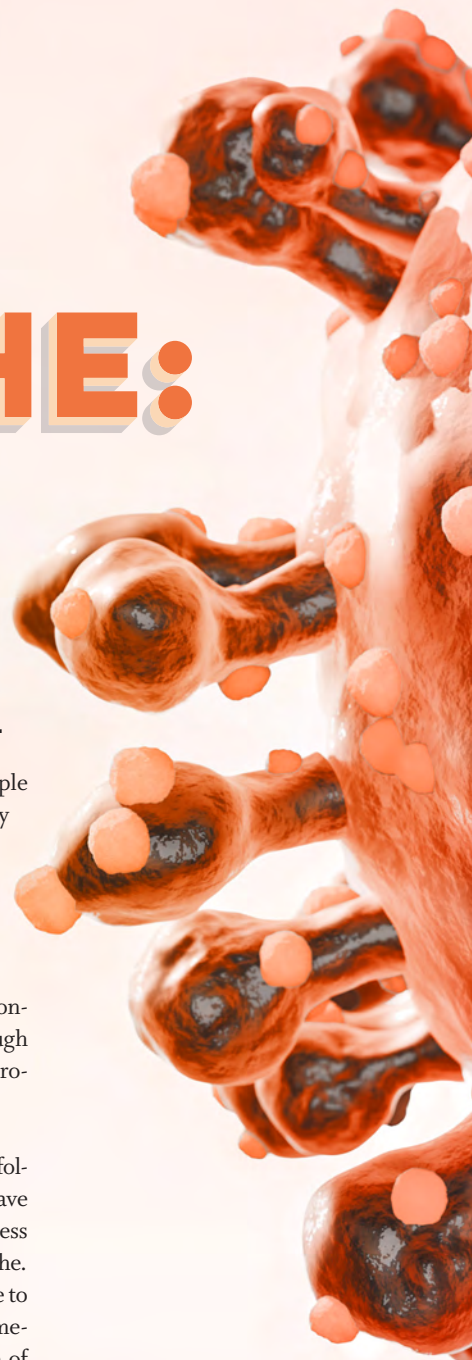
Unfortunately, some unlucky people can contract a pathogen that makes them ill. West Nile virus is the leading cause of mosquito-borne disease in the U.S. and has been plaguing Ameri-

cans since 1999. Then in 2015, people heard about a new illness spread by mosquitoes, called Zika, which ultimately caused locally acquired cases in the continental U.S. in 2016 and 2017.

This summer, people in the U.S. may once again be at risk of contracting a new virus spread through the bite of an infected insect — Oropouche virus.

WHAT IS ORPOUCHE? If you follow insect-related news, you may have read about a new vector-borne illness popping up in 2024 called Oropouche.

Oropouche virus can cause people to get sick with Oropouche fever, sometimes called sloth fever due to one of the known sources (or reservoirs) of the virus. Symptoms of the disease are similar to other vector-borne diseases. This may include fever, severe head-





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ache, chills, muscles aches and joint pain.

Additionally, the World Health Organization (WHO) stated that, in 2024, the first-ever fatalities were reported for Oropouche in healthy people infected with the virus. Unfortunately, infection may carry additional risks during pregnancy, much like Zika. In fact, public health professionals are investigating reports of pregnant women infected with Oropouche virus miscarrying or giving birth to children with birth defects.

First identified in 1955 in Trinidad and Tobago, relatively infrequent human cases have occurred since in several South and Central American countries, especially in the Amazon Basin. However, unknown factors have allowed the virus to leave its previously known range, resulting in human cases in new locations, getting as close to the continental U.S. as Cuba.

In addition to causing human illness in

Protect Yourself:

1. Wear EPA-registered on-skin repellents that include biting midges on the label.
2. Avoid activity, when possible, during dusk and dawn when many biting midges and disease-causing mosquitoes are active.
3. Install screens with a very fine mesh that do not have any holes or other damage.
4. Reduce or eliminate moist substrates and muddy environments to prevent biting midge development.
5. Get rid of standing water around homes to stop mosquitoes from developing.

locations with no history of the disease, people traveling to these areas have contracted the virus and come home sick. These are known as traveler cases. In 2024,

the U.S. reported 108 traveler cases in six different states: California, Colorado, Florida, Kentucky, New Jersey and New York.

WHAT ARE THE VECTORS? According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), scientists believe the main insect vector of Oropouche virus is a biting midge, *Culicoides paraensis*. Biting midges, also known as “no-see-ums” or “punkies,” are tiny true flies that develop in different habitats. However, in general, immature biting midges like damp substrates with high organic content such as those around marshes, ponds or fields with a lot of manure. Similar to mosquitoes, only adult female biting midges take a blood meal.

This particular species of biting midge likes woodlands and often develops in damp tree holes, under decaying plants and in other moist, mossy environments. As for its range in the U.S., folks have re-

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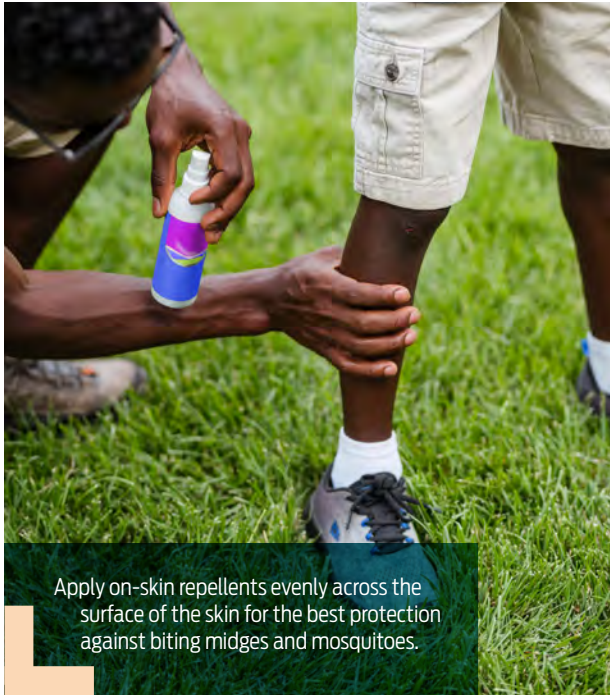
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corded *C. paraensis* in the southeastern and midwestern parts of the country.

Certain mosquitoes, such as the southern house mosquito, *Culex quinquefasciatus*, also may spread the virus to humans. Vector control professionals often target the southern house mosquito, since this mosquito can exist in environments densely populated with people and spread other viruses such as West Nile virus and St. Louis encephalitis virus.

Additional mosquito species also may spread Oropouche virus, and scientists are actively researching other potential vectors. The good news: the mosquitoes investigated so far seem to transmit the virus very poorly to people, so the risk from these critters remains small.

PROTECT YOURSELF. As with other insect vectors, preventing bites remains the best way to avoid exposure to the virus. When possible, wear long sleeves and pants outside — especially around dusk and dawn. Use Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)-registered on-skin repellents that include biting midges or *Culicoides* on the label, and make sure to follow all instructions for use.

You need to apply on-skin repellents evenly across the surface area of your skin. A little spray applied to your pulse points, like

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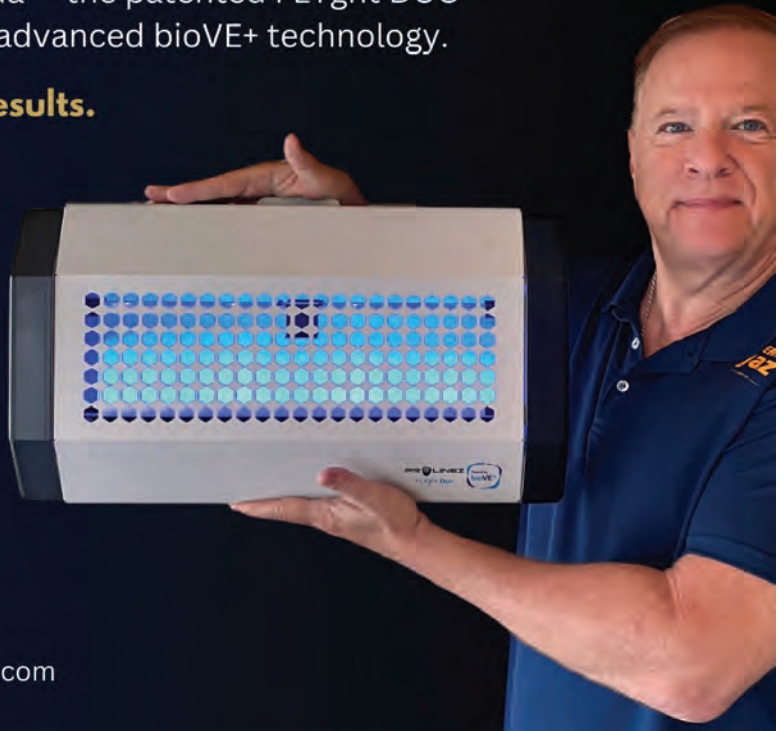
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Biting midges (left)
are much smaller than
mosquitoes (right).

how you apply perfume, will not protect you from biting insects.

When you are at home, make sure to use undamaged window screens to keep biting midges and mosquitoes out. However, biting midges are tiny, so typical window screen mesh that is effective against mosquitoes will not work. For biting midges, you need to use a fine mesh size. Unfortunately, the fine mesh required to protect you from biting midges also may restrict air flow. But these pests are not strong fliers, so fans may help protect people as well.

As for management, controlling biting midges is very hard. EPA suggests using an integrated pest management (IPM) approach that focuses on preventing bites. This may include treating screens with barrier sprays or portable foggers. As always, make sure to follow all label directions.

Regarding applications targeting the adult stage, the University of Florida has reported that while some pesticides may reduce active adult populations temporarily, biting midges will quickly repopulate an area making these types of applications inefficient. For this reason, you may want to focus control efforts on reducing suitable immature habitats, such as cultural practices to dry out the ground. But be aware, several university extension publications have highlighted how larval management may be impractical or produce limited results.

FINAL THOUGHTS. Any time the news begins reporting on a new disease, people

may experience anxiety and dread, especially after our shared experience with the COVID-19 pandemic. However, knowledge and education can help reduce that fear and empower people to protect themselves.

Dan Markowski, Ph.D. and technical advisor for the American Mosquito Control Association (AMCA), said, “The best strategies we currently have center on educating the public about the *Culicoides* they have in their area, as not all midges will transmit the virus.”

While scientists have known about the existence of Oropouche virus for 70 years, much still remains unknown. The positive news is that there is an entire network already moving to create real, actionable control recommendations.

“AMCA is funding, through the CDC, multiple projects that will evaluate a number of control strategies for Oropouche vectors (*Culicoides* midges),” Markowski said. “These projects range from determining repellent efficacy to evaluating multiple larval control and adult control strategies.”

As for what you can do now, he said, “I would recommend that all PMPs educate themselves on the species of biting midges in their area, stay tuned for more detailed guidance from the CDC and if midge populations need control, consider standard outdoor perimeter treatments to vegetation and structures.” **PCT**

The author is founder and principle consultant at Bug Lessons.



THE ENEMY BELOW

One of the world's most dangerous pests has colonized the nation's capital. But is anybody listening? By Al Greene

Poll the world's medical entomologists and public health officials as to what single species presents the most clear and present danger to all of humanity—other than humans themselves—and it's a safe bet that the winner will be a uniquely infamous and extraordinary mosquito: *Aedes aegypti*.

Once commonly named the yellow fever mosquito, *Ae. aegypti* has now become the primary vector of other dreaded viral diseases such as dengue, Zika and chikungunya. Originally native to Africa, it has become the most globally widespread mosquito species, largely because it has also evolved to be the mosquito most specialized for living among humans in dense urban environments and using us



Different cultures, same message. The anti-dengue sign is in Bonaire, a small Dutch island in the Caribbean where the disease is endemic. The anti-Zika sign was posted in Chevy Chase, Md., during an outbreak throughout the Americas in 2015-2016 that reached as far north as Florida and Texas.

as its nearly exclusive food source. Responsible for hundreds of millions of infections each year, these tiny, darting pests employ a virtually limitless assortment of both indoor and outdoor artificial water sources for breeding.

For centuries, the one thing that constrained *Ae. aegypti*'s range as it hitchhiked via ocean commerce around the world, was its sensitivity to cold. Confined mainly to the tropics and subtropics, it's been waiting at the doorstep of the great north temperate zone belt of westernized societies that have the greatest accumulated wealth and scientific resources necessary to combat it, but which have never regarded it as an immediate problem.

But no longer. Bit(e) by bit(e), aided by a warming planet, the remarkable genome of this insect has allowed it to stealthily penetrate northward into climates that once were a hostile barrier. It has done so most dramatically by hiding, breeding and overwintering underground.

CAVERNS OF CONCRETE. Below the surface of every urban center in the world is a maze of subterranean habitats that is the human-made equivalent of natural cave systems, which are technically referred to as karst topography. This so-called urban karst consists of infrastructure such as sewers, steam and other utility tunnels, machine rooms, electrical vaults and underground parking garages.^{1,2}

Due to several physical characteristics of urban karst, including a stable, relatively protected environment, abundant water, continuous structural disintegration and an extraordinary degree of interconnectedness of all its component cavities, this hidden ecosystem is typically colonized by a predictable array of invertebrates and rodents. It tends to be a harsh domain, and most of the arthropods down there are scavengers, with the dominant species worldwide being the American cockroach, *Periplaneta americana*.

In the subterranean realm of Washington, D.C., which I've spent the last 30 years exploring, one of the most common arthropod predators is the Mediterranean



Dr. Megan Fritz (kneeling) and graduate student Arielle Arsenault-Benoit measure a puddle in an underground parking garage that was inhabited by mosquito larvae and pupae.

recluse spider, *Loxosceles rufescens*. This venomous species occurs in many different habitats over much of the world, but in this country almost exclusively lives as a phantom-like presence in basements and underground foundation walls of large institutional or commercial buildings.³ Although its venom is virtually identical to other studied recluse species, it is not considered to be a public health problem in the Western Hemisphere because it is so rarely encountered by people.

There is a second arthropod species that famously inhabits deep urban infrastructure, but interacts with humans on a fairly regular basis. During the London Blitz, much of which took place in the winter months of 1940, civilians sheltering in subway tunnels from German bombs were continually attacked by — of all things — hordes of mosquitoes living there. What soon came to be called the London underground mosquito turned out to be a distinctive genetic variant of the common northern house mosquito, *Culex pipiens*, that had actually been known since the 18th century, named (appropriately) *Cx. pipiens form molestus*. Whereas typical *Cx. pipiens* are active only in warm weather and primarily feed in the tree canopy on birds, *molestus* is a ravenous mammal

feeder, is active all year round, can breed in extremely confined spaces and, most amazingly, does not require a blood meal for the first batch of eggs. They are ideally suited to colonize subterranean sources of water and, if human or rodent blood is unavailable, their populations can nevertheless persist for generations solely on decaying organic material gleaned by the larvae.

Cx. pipiens form molestus periodically inhabits the basement sumps of federal buildings in downtown Washington, D.C., often finding their way up to offices above ground and snacking on the human occupants. Therefore, when employees of several federal agencies in a building managed by my employer, the U.S. General Services Administration, complained of being bitten by mosquitoes in June of 2018, I naturally assumed that *molestus* was the culprit. It promised to be a perfect study site for Dr. Megan Fritz at the University of Maryland, who specializes in the genetic diversity of *Cx. pipiens*, and with the help of her graduate students, we began exploring the subterranean infrastructure beneath the afflicted offices.

AN OMINOUS DISCOVERY. Most of the environment under the building turned out to be a pair of parking garages. Dis-

appointingly, the water flow through the sumps on their lowest levels (about 36 feet below grade) was quite rapid and completely unsuitable for mosquito larvae. But then we noticed there were abundant puddles throughout the structures, mainly from groundwater seepage but sometimes from plumbing leakage as well.

This standing water, ranging from no more than a thin film to almost 1.5 inches deep, was seething with mosquito immatures. Indeed, more than 900 individuals were collected from a single puddle. In addition, flying mosquito adults in this habitat were captured with the use of a unique, battery-powered vacuum device called an InsectaZooka.

Expanding our search, adults also were sampled in an underground site across town, a cavernous light well moat surrounding a 19th century government office building about eight feet below grade.

Back in the lab, graduate student Arielle Arsenault-Benoit, who earned her Ph.D. in 2023, took the lead with the project. The analyzed data revealed six mosquito taxa were inhabiting the three underground sites, with the majority of individuals belonging to the *Cx. pipiens* complex, including the expected *molestus*. But there was a far more sinister species that also was present in these secluded locations: both adults and immatures of *Ae. aegypti*.

In fact, our discovery followed on the heels of a curious, earlier case of a persistent, seemingly localized *Ae. aegypti* population in Washington, D.C. In 2011 and succeeding years, Andy Lima, a mosquito biologist employed by Virginia's Fairfax County Health Department, documented adults and larvae of the species in various microhabitats — including garden fountains, birdbaths, potted plant saucers — within a few square blocks of the histor-

ic residential Capitol Hill neighborhood.^{4,5}

Lima and colleagues suggested that the only way the cold-sensitive species could be reliably surviving at this relatively high latitude was by overwintering in warm, subterranean tunnels or other cavities. However, while these authors collected its larvae just below the grate of a stormwater basin, the deeper underground whereabouts of *Ae. aegypti* in the neighborhood remained a mystery.

The findings raised a few eyebrows among entomologists and the local press, but was (and still is, for the most part) inexplicably dismissed as some sort of limited, contained enclave. The general tone of denial was expressed by one of Lima's coauthors, who in 2016 was quoted in a CNN interview as saying: "They're a very small population and very isolated, and they're not going to take over Washington, D.C." But, spoiler alert: They already have.

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AN UNCERTAIN FUTURE. There are several implications to the latest arthropod inhabitant of D.C.'s urban karst, none of them good. Considering the ability of invasive species in general, and *Ae. aegypti* in particular, to rapidly expand their ranges throughout a suitable area once a foothold has been established, the conception that the Capitol Hill sample ever represented some sort of exceptional, confined zone for this mosquito seems a trifle naïve. It also should be pointed out that *Ae. aegypti* is well known to breed in underground water sources (cisterns, septic tanks, stormwater drain sumps) all over the world, even in tropical regions. In reality, we have no idea where in Washington, D.C., the original foothold may have been.

It's a moot point now. The two parking garages we worked in were about a mile away from the Capitol Hill sites. The dry moat was more than twice that distance.

And *Ae. aegypti* adults have now been collected across much of the entire downtown area, up to three miles from Capitol Hill. During our walks through the city, we commonly observed them resting on building walls, apparently having flown up through the sidewalk grates leading to underground transformer vaults. These ubiquitous features of subterranean urban infrastructure typically accumulate standing water from surface runoff, and due to substantial heat generation, require ventilation that is normally provided by an open top covered with a grate. They are well-known breeding sites for *Culex* spp. in other American cities. Urban sewer systems are similarly attractive as they are heated year-round with warm water discharge.

Of course, an *Ae. aegypti* is just another nuisance mosquito if the insect has not previously fed on a person already infected with a dangerous virus. But considering

that most U.S. cities have a continuous influx of travelers returning from regions where these viruses are endemic, it seems to be a matter of when — not if — a critical local reservoir of infected people will enable a chain reaction of disease transmission.

The colonization of the nation's capital by the world's most dangerous invasive species has enormous symbolic importance. An enemy at its gates is emblematic of the vulnerability of a large and relentlessly expanding zone of suitable habitat for *Ae. aegypti* throughout the country, catalyzed by a warming climate, which already contains a majority of people living in the United States. The establishment of a comprehensive management program based on surveillance of subterranean infrastructure and larviciding of standing water when warranted should be an urgent priority of Washington, D.C., public health officials and their partners in the urban entomological community. **PCT**

The author served for 30 years as entomologist and national IPM coordinator for the Public Buildings Service, U.S. General Services Administration, Washington, D.C.

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Don't Forget to Look Up

When we deal with most pest issues involving a structure, we look down.

Whether it be rodents, ants, cockroaches, beetles or pretty much everything else we control on a regular basis, people usually associate these pests with the ground and look down. Many pests are controlled by measures taken on the ground level, but with some common pests, looking up can help you resolve issues faster. I'm going to concentrate on a few pests for this article, but think about all the times you have come across something that made you look up, and then think about what other pests could mimic those behaviors.

RODENTS. There are many times that mice or rats will be in the upper levels of a structure. This is especially true when talking about roof rats. This happens a lot in hotels or multi-level housing units. Rodents will live in the gap between the ceiling and floor of these levels and pop out where they find gaps large enough to forage for food and water. They are usually happy living in these spaces, and if you always assume they are starting from the ground floor, this can delay taking care of the issue.

Find any access panels in the ceiling and utilize these areas as part of your inspection. Some rodents will never touch the ground level of a structure. You can put as many control devices as you can fit into the space, but if the rodent never touches the ground, you are just wasting your time, money and efforts for a resolution that will never actualize.

It is especially important to properly identify which type of rat you are dealing with. If you are assuming the rodent is a Norway rat, but it is really a roof rat, this can cause you and your customer some problems. They usually live in different areas and have different habits. If you are operating off incorrect assumptions, then you might not get the results you are looking to achieve.

ANTS. There are many ways that ants can cause you problems from up high. They can cross trees, cable lines or anything else that touches the structure. Aerial colonies are

missed a lot. Ants can start colonies up high, and if you just keep concentrating your efforts on the ground level, you will have to deal with unhappy customers.

A common area where ants nest that gets missed is gutters. Even if the gutters don't have trees growing in them, take a moment to check them to see if there is any dirt up there that they could be nesting in. This got me once early in my career, 20-plus years ago, and I still remember it vividly.

“When I have a pest issue that I am struggling to control, I find it best to take a step back, take off my blinders and try to look at the account with fresh eyes.”

Carpenter ants can be another common problem in the upper levels. They will start their satellite colonies anywhere, and attics are common areas for them to nest inside.

CIMICIDS. Cimicids are another pest people have some trouble with, especially types that we do not commonly run across. I have helped numerous people properly identify bat bugs, but the habits that are described to me are what give it away.

The occupants are usually talking about being bitten every night in their bed, but no bed bugs are ever found. Or the pest control operator will only find them at the ceiling wall junction or by the windows, never in the bed or chair. This tells me that there are bats bugs above that unit, and this problem will not go away until that issue goes away.

Another example is when someone is constantly being bitten in a chair by the fireplace, but no bugs are ever found in the chair, only around the fireplace or up high. This tells me that they either have chimney-swift bugs or swallow bugs. Both are similar to bat bugs and bed bugs but parasitize birds. Much like bat bugs, if you try to treat this issue like a bed bug problem, you will have limited results. Look up and see where the problems are originating.

WHAT TO LOOK FOR. Obvious signs to look for are holes or gaps. Check the ceiling, walls and corners for holes, cracks or gaps

that could serve as entry points for pests like rodents, ants or insects.

In an attic, it's crucial to inspect for signs of pests. Look for droppings, nests or chew marks on beams or insulation.

For rodents, look for droppings, gnaw marks or shredded insulation. In dusty areas, rodent tracks may be visible.

Inspect the ceiling for visible insects like ants, cockroaches or flies. Look for small holes in the walls where insects might be entering.

Light fixtures are often overlooked. Insects like ants, flies or wasps may be attracted to light. Check around light fixtures in the upper levels of the structure, including in the attic, to see if pests are clustered around them or what dead insects you can find inside these structures. You also can use an insect light trap (ILT) as a monitoring tool to see what is going on.

When I have a pest issue that I am struggling to control, I find it best to take a step back, take off my blinders and try to look at the account with fresh eyes. Then, I do a completely new inspection and explore new areas that I would not normally look at.

We have preconceived notions about what to expect and how to approach it, but that does not work 100% of the time.

Looking up is one of the items that I make sure I do while re-evaluating a structure to make sure I don't miss an obvious resolution to a pest issue.

Trust me — you will enjoy the extra time, and your customers will enjoy having their issues resolved in a timely manner. **PCT**

The author is a board certified entomologist and manager of technical services for Dodson Pest Control. He has over 25 years of experience in pest management and has worked with USAID in Mali and Africa, and with the state of Virginia to help create the Virginia Pollinator Protection Plan. He is a member of the Urban Pest Management Technical Committee (upmtc.org).

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Don't Get Stung: A Pest Expert's Guide to Stinging Insects

Stinging insects pose a significant threat, especially during peak season, demanding effective pest management strategies to protect both clients and pest control professionals. As a pest control expert, it's critical to have a comprehensive understanding of stinging insect behavior and nesting habits to minimize the risk of stings.

This guide provides essential information on accurately identifying common species, explaining swarming behavior and differentiating between ground and hanging nests, facilitating targeted treatments and promoting a safer environment for everyone.

IDENTIFYING STINGING INSECTS. When addressing a stinging insect issue, the first step is always proper identification. Yellowjackets are among the most frequently encountered stinging insects. It is important to note that there are several yellowjacket species throughout the country, each exhibiting diverse nesting preferences. In the southern United States, Africanized honeybees, also known as "killer bees," pose a significant concern. These bees are more defensive of their nests and tend to swarm in large numbers. Recognizing these key species is essential for determining the appropriate course of action.

THE MYSTERY OF SWARMING. Swarming is a behavior exhibited by many colonial stinging insects, particularly honeybees. This phenomenon often sparks alarm, but understanding its cause can help alleviate fear and inform proper management strategies. Honeybee swarming typically occurs when a colony becomes overcrowded, prompting the queen bee and a significant portion of the worker bees to leave their existing nest to establish a new one.

A honeybee swarm in progress appears as a dense ball of bees, often clinging to a branch. While swarms can be intimidating, the bees are generally less aggressive during this period since they do not have a nest to

defend. In most cases, swarms are temporary and will relocate within 24 hours. However, if a swarm persists, it is advisable to contact a beekeeper for safe removal.

Hornets and yellowjackets also will swarm at the end of the season. During this phenomenon, reproductive males and new queens leave the nest to seek out members of the same species from another nest to mate with. This is a much less noticeable event, so it is often overlooked, but it is an important part of the insect's reproductive cycle.

TYPES OF NESTS. Another critical aspect of stinging insect management is identifying the location and type of nest. Some stinging insects, like certain yellowjacket species and bumblebees, prefer to build their nests in the ground, often utilizing abandoned rodent burrows. Some yellowjackets also may nest in roof lines or wall voids, while bald-faced hornets usually construct hanging nests suspended from tree branches or building overhangs. European hornets prefer to nest in above ground voids inside roof lines or hollow tree trunks. Honeybees commonly nest in elevated voids such as walls or hollow tree trunks.

Despite differences in location, the treatment approach for ground nests, void nests and hanging nests is often similar. The most effective method usually involves the direct injection of an insecticide into the nest. Whether the nest is underground or situated in an above ground void, this technique can help eliminate the colony.

PROMOTING SAFETY. When dealing with stinging insects, safety should always be the top priority. It is crucial to gather information from the client about the nest's location and appearance. This will help determine the species and the safest course of treatment. Before the nest is treated, clients should be advised to maintain a safe distance from it. Typically, a distance of at least 10-15 feet is recommended, but the safest option is to move inside the home with windows closed to avoid provok-

ing an attack. If necessary, a barricade can be established to prevent accidental contact with the nest.

For personal protection, clients should consider wearing long pants, long sleeves, shoes and socks when working in areas with stinging insects. However, this may not always be practical in hot weather, so maintaining situational awareness is also important. Observing flight paths can help identify nest locations.

Pest control professionals should *always* wear a high-quality complete bee suit to minimize the chances of getting stung during a stinging insect treatment. This should be donned before inspecting for the nest location and thoroughly checked for clinging wasps and bees before removing it at the end of the service.

RESPONSIBLE PEST MANAGEMENT. Pest control professionals also have a responsibility to protect beneficial insects, particularly pollinators like honeybees and solitary bees. While eradication may be necessary in some situations, efforts should be made to relocate honeybee swarms whenever possible. Additionally, service technicians should exercise caution when applying treatments to avoid affecting flowering plants visited by bees.

Educating clients about preventive measures is another important aspect of responsible pest management. Homeowners can help deter stinging insects by filling in old rodent burrows, maintaining tidy yards and managing food sources. Planting flowering plants can attract pollinators but should be done strategically to minimize conflicts with humans.

By integrating expertise in stinging insect identification and behavior with a dedication to safety and responsible practices, pest control professionals can effectively address stinging insect issues while reducing risks to both people and the environment. **PCT**

The author is technical services manager for Rentokil Terminix.

Envu

us.envu.com/pest-management-and-public-health

Envu introduced Suspend Contact & Residual Aerosol, an aerosol formulation for indoor and outdoor use. It combines deltamethrin with pyrethrin, offering residual control for up to 18 months¹ against German cockroaches and Argentine ants. The product's dual-action formulation targets pests — such as ants, ticks, spiders and cockroaches — in hard-to-reach areas.

Also new from Envu is Barricor Essential Mosquito Control, a FIFRA 25(b) essential oil-based product. It offers a 24-hour² mortality rate for *Aedes* mosquitoes and is designed to be non-toxic to pollinators, Envu reports. Barricor Essential Mosquito Control is intended to minimize AI load and is stable without frequent remixing. The product is noncorrosive and does not require signal words or personal protective equipment (PPE) under typical use conditions.³

¹U.S. EPA (2013). Label amendment for pesticide product: Registration number 73049-368.

²When used as directed, 24 hours for *Aedes* and 48 hours for *Culex*

³No PPE is required to mix and apply unless required by applicable law. If so, wear adequate eye protection and gloves.



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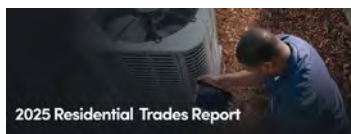
Engineered for precision and efficiency, this tool can be used by pest management professionals to enhance their termite and pest detection capabilities. The iTraker Pro delivers highly accurate and reliable results, optimizing inspections with cutting-edge technology that boosts efficiency and streamlines business operations, the manufacturer reports. The iTraker Pro features a thermal imaging camera, non-invasive radar (motion) technology, moisture and temperature sensing capabilities and real-time data collection and reporting, providing for accuracy, reliability and operational excellence, Termatrac reports. Termatrac also offers the Termatrac iTraker Base, an entry level device.



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ServiceTitan released its second annual Residential Services Report, providing



insights into the current state of the industry. The report, based on a study of more than 1,000 residential service contractors — including pest control operators — indicates the majority of the service providers (63%) are thriving or experiencing consistent growth and are positioned for continued success. The report showed that customers value a variety of options, with contractors offering multiple estimates to help homeowners make informed decisions, while struggling businesses may benefit from adopting a similar approach to enhance customer satisfaction and business success. Visit www.servicetitan.com to download the entire report for free. **PCT**

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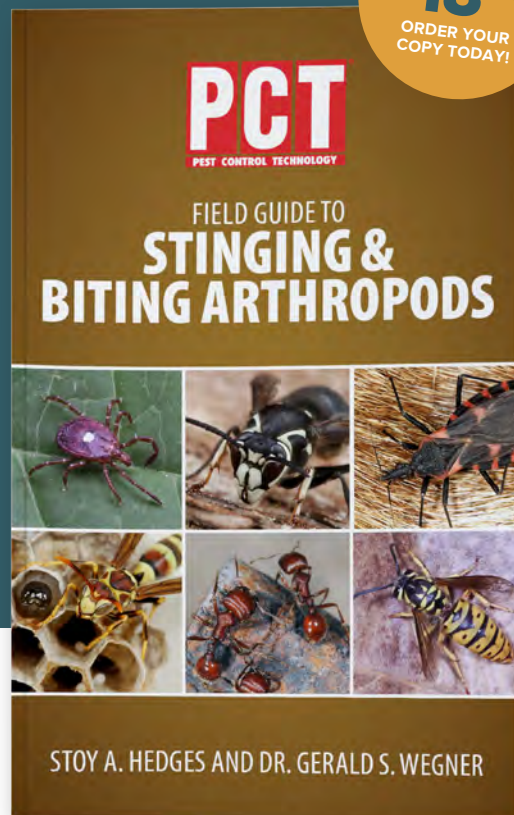
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Gnawed Wood, Detritus



Subterranean, T.
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2025
Gnawed Wood, Bark, Larvae, Frass



Artwork from Orkin's
"Chewed Art" campaign
include (left to right):
"Undulate," "Symphony
of Decay" and "Liminal
Spaces."



Subterranean, T.
Liminal Spaces
2025
Plaster, Gnawed Wood, Frass



Termite-Damaged Wood as Artwork

What sometimes can unfortunately be found behind walls — termite-damaged wood — is front and center on walls in Orkin's new "Chewed Art" ad campaign.

Orkin and its creative partner, agency DDB, took termite-damage wood images and turned them into glossy photos on display at an art gallery.

In one 30-second commercial, art gallery visitors are shown admiring the framed photos with a narrator explaining that the artwork was "exquisitely crafted from gnawed wood and detritus, valued at tens of thousands of dollars...in termite damage."

Cam Glover, vice president of marketing at Orkin, told PCT the "Chewed Art" campaign's goal was to create a fun, creative way to educate homeowners about the importance of termite protection.

"We wanted to specifically reach first-time homeowners, or people moving into a new

house, who often prioritize cosmetic improvements when they move in, such as repainting walls or hanging artwork," Glover said. "We started looking at how termite damage looks and found that there were some unique patterns and designs. So, it sparked the idea of using it as art that someone might hang, but with an educational message attached."

From a purely visual perspective, termite-chewed wood is striking, "and the juxtaposition that these unique beautiful patterns cause such serious damage is what I think makes the campaign so interesting," Glover said.

"Chewed Art" is different from typical Orkin termite ad campaigns in which the Orkin professional is the focal point. "We just thought it was so unique that it would be breakthrough. It would be attention grabbing, or as a lot of people on social call it: thumbstopping," Glover said.

Early results of the campaign have been

promising, Glover said, noting that Orkin has been measuring traffic to all its social media platforms and "we're already seeing performance on par with some of our better performing campaigns. It's been driving traffic to the website at a competitive cost for landing page view."

To extend the campaign's reach, Orkin offered a free print of the termite art shared in the campaign to the first 500 customers who signed up and received a free termite inspection from Orkin by March 31. Also, this campaign was launched on the heels of Orkin releasing its annual Top 50 Termite Cities list and Glover said he thinks the campaign will really resonate with residents in those termite-troubled markets. **PCT**— Brad Harbison

Visit bit.ly/4gX8QsN to watch the 30-second version of Orkin's "Chewed Art" commercial.





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