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A man in a blue uniform, cap, and gloves is applying a spray product to a window frame. The product can is labeled "PT Upkeep". The background shows a building with large windows and some greenery.

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COVER STORY

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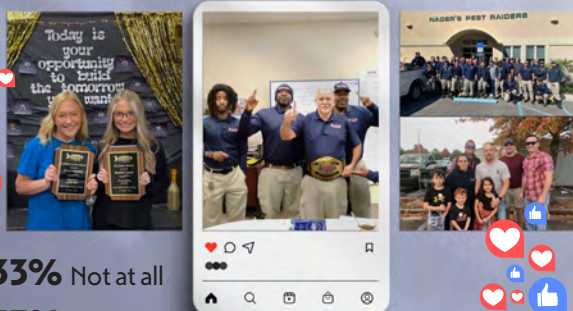
READER POLL RESULTS

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

To what extent do you market your pest control services with paid social media advertising?

33% Not at all
53% A little
15% Extensively

Source: PCT Reader Poll, April 2025



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.

NEW: Recently Added Video Interviews

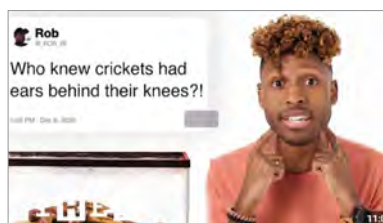
The PCT staff has been busy recording video interviews with leading PCOs, technical/training directors, entomologists and others. Recently added videos interviews include:

- Truly Nolen's Matt Christensen and Cassandra Gaud on Culture-Building
- Rob Jackson on Growth of His Family Business
- Purdue's Catherine Hill on AI for Tracking Tick, Mosquito Hotspots
- Hawaii PCO Wakon Childers Shares Regulatory Challenges, Business Impacts from Lahaina Wildfires
- Richard Christner on Colorado's Preemption Roll Back



Wakon Childers

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



Viral Video Sensation Sammy Ramsey

Up-and-coming entomologist Sammy Ramsey has emerged as an important voice in the field of pest research since he was featured in PCT (download this 2012 feature at bit.ly/3ARXnG9). This month's issue (page 76) includes an update on Ramsey, noting his work on bee health and parasitic threats. Did you know Ramsey has also become a viral video sensation? His "Entomologist Answers Insect Questions From Twitter" video has received more than 824,000 views on YouTube. Check out the video at bit.ly/44CMzOC.

On-Demand Webinars

PCT hosts informative webinars throughout the year, covering both technical and management issues. If you are not able to attend these webinars the day of the event, you can access them on demand. Recent PCT-hosted webinars include "Mastering Rodent Exclusion"; "Leveraging Operational Insights for Improved Financial Performance" and "Employee Incentives — Going Beyond the Annual Raise."

SCAN & DISCOVER

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Your Mission: Bring Veterans Onboard

During NPMA's Legislative Day in March, Jacob Kulzer of Ecolab received the David Cooksey PestVet of the Year Award. He recalled a conversation from a managers' meeting early in his time with the company: "They asked what I knew about pest control. I said, 'not much.' Chemicals? 'Also not much.' They asked, 'So what do you know?' I looked at the team and said, 'OK, you've got a crew of 15, some direct reports, and you go to a site in uniform, drive a vehicle, eliminate threats, and write a report afterward.' They said, 'That's pretty accurate.' I responded, 'Well, my job is to prioritize your tasks, ensure you have the resources you need, advocate for you up the chain, and make sure we're aligned with company goals. I think I've got this.'"

Kulzer, like most industry professionals, never planned for a career in pest control, but he discovered the skills he learned in the military transferred well to this profession. Like several other companies featured in this month's cover story, "Veterans Wanted" (page 66), Ecolab recognized the significant value veterans like Kulzer can bring to their organization.

Veterans bring a lot to the table, and it's not just the pest control industry that's noticed — there's serious hiring competition. That's why NPMA has stepped up its game through the NPMA Military Hiring Program. One key part of that effort is a partnership with the U.S. Department of Defense's SkillBridge program. Another is the PestVets Council, a dedicated group of NPMA members who focus on supporting active-duty service members, veterans and their families through things like mentorship, volunteering and fundraising. On top of all that, the NPMA Military Hiring Program is helping educate business leaders outside the military world on the best ways to recruit and hire veterans.

Our coverage includes the story of Burns Pest Elimination's hire of retired Air Force Technical Sergeant Brandon McClure, a great example of the SkillBridge program in action. After joining the company through the program, McClure was quickly promoted from service technician to field supervisor in just six months, highlighting both his strong capabilities and the program's effectiveness in connecting veterans with meaningful career opportunities. We hope this month's cover story provides you with excellent examples of how your peers are finding, hiring and integrating veterans — and how they are reaping the benefits.

This month's cover story on veterans gave me pause to reflect on my late grandfather, Robert Munn, a U.S. Army World War II veteran. His experience was unique in that he served in both theaters — Europe and Asia. His wartime journey began with basic training in El Paso, Texas, and concluded with teaching law in Japan during the post-war U.S. occupation (pretty impressive considering his was only a PFC). Following basic training he was sent to Germany, where he served in the infantry as a foot soldier. One of our family's favorite photos of him was during his service in Germany (right). We believe the photographer perfectly captured the emotion of sadness, tempered by determination. As my Uncle Jeff shared: "I sometimes think of what it was like not only for him, but for my mom as well, being without her husband (they hadn't been married long) and with a toddler (your mom) to care for. People were made of sterner stuff then."



PFC Robert S. Munn in Germany during WWII.

His comments reminded me not only of the sacrifices our soldiers make, but also of those made by their families. **PCT**

The author is senior news editor of PCT magazine.



Publisher

Jodi Dorsch — jdorsch@gie.net

Senior News Editor

Brad Harbison — bharbison@gie.net

Managing Editor

Katie Hobbins — khobbins@gie.net

Senior Editor

Jacqueline Mitchell — jtmitchell@gie.net

Digital Editor

Amanda Joerndt — ajoerndt@gie.net

National Sales Manager

Michael Kelly — mkelly@gie.net

**Marketing Manager/
Western Region Account Manager**
Mike Zaverl — mzaavel@gie.net

Market Coordinator

Amy Peppers — aypeppers@gie.net

Contributing Technical Editors

Dr. Bobby Corrigan, Chelle Hartzler

Columnists

Jim Fredericks, Ashley Roden, B.C.E.

Creative Director

Jim Blayne — jblayne@gie.net

Senior Art Director

Andrea Vagas — avagas@gie.net

Advertising Production Coordinator

Lori Skala — lskala@gie.net

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President and CEO

Chris Foster

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Michelle Wisniewski

CORPORATE/EDITORIAL/PRODUCTION OFFICE

5811 Canal Road
Valley View, OH 44125
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EXCERPT FROM
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Bed Bugs: **A New Day**

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This tiny pest has plagued humankind throughout recorded history, but the pest management industry has learned a lot in recent years. Go beyond biology and behavior in the following piece that discusses client preparation/client cooperation, inspection tips and tricks, management vs. elimination, and more.



Editor's note: The Mallis Handbook of Pest Control has been an essential educational resource for pest management professionals for nearly eight decades, documenting the biology, behavior and control of virtually all structural pests they encounter. Later this year, PCT's parent company, GIE Media, will publish the eagerly anticipated 11th edition of this 1,300+ page reference book featuring editorial contributions from some of the industry's most respected university educators, independent consultants and urban entomologists.



In the following excerpt, Dr. Richard Cooper, a frequent speaker at industry trade shows and educational events, shares his recommendations for implementing a successful bed bug program. For information about the references mentioned here, visit bit.ly/3JccnWU.

This special insert is sponsored by MGK (www.mgk.com).



The common bed bug, *Cimex lectularius* L., is about 3/16-inch long, 1/8-inch wide, broadly oval, and flat. It is brown to reddish-brown in color with a 3-segmented beak, 4-segmented antennae, and vestigial wings. Prior to feeding, nymphs appear translucent or pale in color. Bed bugs have very thin, vertically flattened bodies covered with short, golden-colored hairs.

Bed bugs are nocturnal insects that feed exclusively on blood, which is required for development and reproduction. Humans serve as the primary host, but bed bugs will also readily feed on birds as well as other animals (Ussinger 1966).

PERFORMING AN INSPECTION. When dealing with active infestations, the inspection and implementation of control measures go hand in hand and are often done in conjunction with one another rather than as separate activities. For a comprehensive review on inspections and monitoring refer to Vaidyanathan and

Feldlaufer (2013) and Cooper and Wang (2018a).

The most common type of inspection is a visual inspection; however, canine scent detection is another option that may be done in conjunction with, or in place of, visual inspections. Bed bug traps are another tool that can be used to aid in the detection and monitoring of bed bug activity. Regardless of the inspection methods employed, it is important to recognize that it is virtually impossible to declare a dwelling 100% bed bug-free using the inspection tools and methods currently available.

Several key points have significant implications in successful bed bug management and should be kept in mind and used to guide eradication efforts. They include:

1. Most infestations in multi-family housing communities go unreported by residents. Fewer than one-third of existing bed bug infestations are reported by residents to property management. Periodic inspections of



The common bed bug, *Cimex lectularius*, is broadly oval-shaped. (Stoy Hedges)

apartments are recommended to identify infestations that have not been reported, particularly in communities with a history of chronic activity or high-infestation rates.

2. Bed bugs will readily move between units in multi-occupancy dwellings. The movement of bed bugs between units in multi-occupancy settings such as apartments and hotels make it essential to include neighboring units in the scope of the control effort. Neighboring units will continue to be at risk of infestation until the

primary infestation has been eliminated. In multi-occupancy high-rise buildings where a common hallway exists, the unit across the hall from an infested unit should be included in the scope of service as well. Failure to expand the scope of the control effort can result in widespread infestations affecting numerous occupants within a building as well as other buildings within the same community.

3. Most bed bugs are found in close association with sleeping or resting areas. It is important to



"The likelihood of successful bed bug management as well as the efficiency in which it is achieved is often directly related to the level to which the client has been educated."

identify all areas being used as sleeping and/or resting areas, as these will influence the distribution of the infestation. While beds may be the usual infested area, infestations are also common in upholstered furniture, such as sofas or chairs, where people may doze off or sleep. Don't overlook desk chairs where people sit for extended periods of time while working on computers. Wheelchairs and motorized scooters are also commonly infested. Infestations under carpet edges as well as on, under, and behind baseboards and floorboards should be expected when people are sleeping on the floor.



A key sign of bed bug activity is the fecal spotting left by bed bugs on surfaces where they harbor. (Stoy Hedges)

4. The number of bugs away from sleeping and resting areas tends to increase and become less predictable over time. Newly introduced infestations tend to be localized, while the percentage of bed bugs and eggs will become more widespread and less predictable the longer the infestation goes undetected. Bed bugs tend to disperse away from primary harborage sites over time. Bugs and eggs in areas away from host sleeping and resting areas are often the cause of control failure and set the stage for a population rebound. As such, control tactics should not be limited to sleeping and resting areas alone.

5. Feeding activity and egg hatch complicate control

efforts and necessitate follow-up visits. Bed bugs do not feed every day but instead may go several days or more between blood meals. As a result, bugs that are between blood meals at the time of treatment may not interact with freshly treated surfaces when residual materials are most effective.

6. Detection and control of bed bugs becomes increasingly difficult following the initial treatment. During the initial treatment, most bed bugs are located in predictable areas and can be eliminated easily. The use of bed bug monitors, such as pitfall-style interceptors, is highly effective for the detection of bed bugs as they travel to seek a blood

meal. When populations are reduced to very low levels, interception devices are not only important in the detection of low-level bed bug activity but can also contribute to the elimination of an infestation.

7. Behavior of bed bugs in the absence of a host is poorly understood. Once an infested dwelling or unit is vacated the behavior of bed bugs becomes unpredictable. Bed bugs can survive for several months or more without a blood meal and can remain in the vacant structure until it is eventually reoccupied, and a host is once again available. In multi-occupancy settings, bugs in vacated units may also be stimulated to migrate to one or more of

the surrounding units in search of a host. In many cases, both activities occur, resulting in the continued infestation of the vacated unit and the spread of bugs to other units.

8. The role of alternate hosts is poorly understood and may have an impact on control. Bed bugs can feed on a wide variety of hosts including cats, dogs, birds, and rodents; however, host preference is poorly understood. It is unclear how readily bed bugs will feed on alternate hosts when humans are also present. In regard to population distribution, the role that alternate hosts may be playing should be considered during the control effort.

9. Visual inspection alone is insufficient for determining when an infestation has been eliminated.

Visual inspections become increasingly less effective as bed bugs become fewer in number. Relying on visual inspection alone to determine the presence of bed bugs increases the risk for prematurely terminating treatment efforts. It is best to use a combination of tools/methods to determine when an infestation has been eliminated.

SPECIAL

CONSIDERATIONS. The factors listed previously should be kept in mind throughout the entire bed bug management effort as each factor can play a key role in the success or failure of the program. However, there are several other “special considerations” PMPs may want to consider when developing a bed bug management program. These include:

1. Education. Education is the foundation of any bed bug management effort. All parties must be well educated regarding their respective roles and responsibilities in the bed bug management effort. The likelihood of successful bed bug management as well as the efficiency in which it is achieved is often directly related to the level to which the client has been educated.

2. Scope of Service. Depending upon the situation,

the scope of service often needs to be expanded beyond the actual infestation. For example, in multi-occupancy structures, such as apartments, hotels, dormitories, or medical facilities, expanding the scope of service beyond the infested unit is a critical component of the bed bug management effort. Using a mark-release-recapture method, Cooper et al. (2015a) demonstrated that bed bugs readily migrate from infested apartments to neighboring units in all directions including apartments across the hallway from the infested apartments where marked bed bugs were released.

Their study also demonstrated that dispersal from infested apartments to neighboring apartments occurs independently of host availability (bugs dispersed from vacant as well as occupied apartments). Based upon the propensity for bed bugs to disperse, the scope of service should be expanded to all units that share a common wall, floor, or ceiling with known infested units as well as units across the hall in buildings where a common hallway is present (Cooper et al. 2015a, Pinto et al. 2021).

Once the scope of the neighboring units to be included in the management effort is defined, the next step is to determine what measures will be taken in the neighboring units. The measures taken

in surrounding units may be as simple as conducting ongoing inspections or can include other proactive measures, such as encasing beds, monitoring for bed bug activity, or treating the units preventively.

Not only is it important to conduct inspections at the onset of the control effort, but it is also advisable to continue inspecting surrounding units periodically throughout the eradication effort, as the risk of migrating bugs increases as additional pressure is placed upon them for survival. In the event bed bugs are found to be present in any of the surrounding units, the scope should again be expanded out from the newly identified infestation. If additional infestations continue to be identified, a decision for a building or complex-wide inspection may be advisable.

3. Client Preparation Versus Client Cooperation.

Client cooperation is an essential component of

a bed bug management effort. It is not uncommon for extensive preparations to be required of clients prior to the initial treatment. Often, the required preparation lists are not only extensive but can be over-burdensome to achieve and are “one-size-fits-all” rather than being based upon the nature of the infestation being treated.

For example, a client with a recent introduction where only a few bed bugs are present is given the same exhaustive prep list as a client whose home is severely infested. It is the opinion of the author that preparations prior to the initial treatment can do more harm than good by causing disruption to the bed bugs and the environment that leads to displacement of bed bugs, making it more difficult to eliminate the infestation.

The concept of “limited-prep” or “no-prep” has been adopted by many pest professionals, however, it is important to recognize



Various stages of bed bugs — eggs, nymph, and adult. (Stoy Hedges)



Bed bugs infesting the seam on a sofa cushion. (Stoy Hedges)

that it should not be confused as meaning client cooperation is unimportant or not expected. Instead, specific requests for cooperation should be based upon inspection findings and limited to actions that will directly impact bed bugs and facilitate control of the infestation.

The type of cooperation required will vary widely based upon the nature of the infested setting. For example, the type of cooperation required in a residential setting will be very different from that required in a commercial office building/retail store.

4. Vacancy of Infested Dwellings. People often vacate dwellings upon learning about a bed bug

infestation. Tenants of apartments may break their lease, leaving the infestation behind. Other times, infestations go unreported by tenants and landlords/property owners don't become aware of infestations until after the unit has been vacated. Regardless of the reasons, once a dwelling is vacated, the behavior of bed bugs becomes unpredictable. Bugs can survive for several months or more in the absence of a host, simply waiting for the structure to become reoccupied weeks or months later.

In multi-family dwellings, some bugs may migrate to the surrounding occupied units in search of a blood meal. Dealing with vacant units that

are still infested can be a complicated situation. Care should be exercised by the pest professional who is asked, "When is it OK to reoccupy the vacant dwelling?" Given the current limitations in the monitoring and detection of bed bugs, it is simply impossible to verify when the vacant unit is free of bugs and can be reoccupied.

Repetitive inspections and treatments are not reliable. Bugs that may still be present are likely to be predominately inactive and not readily accessible, remaining sequestered under baseboards, floorboards, or within wall voids. As a result, they're likely to go undetected and protected from treatment efforts. Active

monitoring devices geared towards stimulating bed bug host-seeking behavior or attracting host-seeking bugs may prove effective in these situations and may be more reliable than visual inspections alone.

5. Preventing Reinfestation.

Steps should be taken to prevent the reintroduction of bed bugs during the control process as well as after an infestation has been eliminated. This requires the education of the occupants on bed bug prevention and may necessitate community-wide education efforts in settings such as apartments and college residence halls. Proactive educational efforts are not possible in all situations.

Environments prone to the introduction of bed bugs on a constant basis, such as hotels, health care facilities, and shelters should consider instituting long-term measures to minimize the likelihood of introduction, as well as measures for early detection of infestations, such as the use of monitors and regular retraining of housekeeping staff in how to find bed bugs during their service.

6. Management vs. Elimination. Situations or conditions may exist that make "elimination" very difficult, if not impossible, making "management" of bed bug populations a

more realistic goal. Examples include environments with a highly transient clientele that may continually reintroduce bed bugs and severe infestations in overcrowded/overly cluttered environments where cooperation does not exist.

In such situations, eliminating the infestation is not likely to occur without some type of intervention to overcome the existing obstacles. Pest professionals should identify any obstacles preventing the elimination of an infestation and clearly

document these prior to the onset of the control program. It is also important to document that elimination may not be possible given the conditions. ♦

The author is a well-known pest control consultant with

more than 35 years of industry experience. He is owner and president of R Cooper Consulting, an independent firm providing consulting services in urban entomology and pest management. Cooper also holds a research position in the Urban Pest Management Lab at Rutgers University, Department of Entomology.

How to Confirm a Bed Bug Infestation

In the event that bed bugs are suspected, the first step should be to confirm that an infestation actually exists. Bed bugs are often suspected due to the presence of physical symptoms (e.g., itchy welts). In the absence of a sample, it is important to conduct an inspection to look for evidence of bed bugs.

Evidence may be seen in the form of fecal deposits (otherwise referred to as spotting), caste skins (exuvia), carcasses, live bugs, or eggs (hatched or unhatched), keeping in mind that live bugs must be found in order to confirm existing activity.

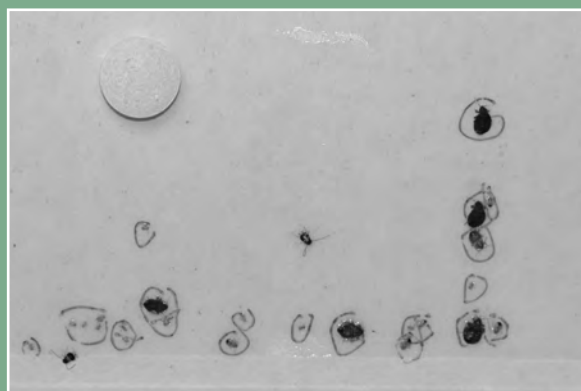
Care should also be taken when examining suspected evidence of bed bugs to avoid misidentification. German cockroach fecal deposits resemble the feces produced by bed bugs but can be differentiated by their rough texture compared to the smooth deposits produced by bed bugs. In addition, the feces produced by bed bugs (dried excreted blood) are water soluble and will smear when moistened with a damp cloth while those of cockroaches will not.

Care should also be taken when examining shed caste skins (exuvia). Shed skins from dermestid beetle larvae are often found in many of the same places as bed bugs such as on mattresses, box springs, under or behind furniture, along baseboards, and along carpeting tack strips. If care is not taken, shed skins from dermestid larvae can be easily mistaken for shed skins from bed bugs.

Immature cockroaches are often in the same locations/environments as bed bugs and can be confused by those not trained in proper identification.

Likewise, psocids, a common structural pest, are similar in appearance to first instar bed bugs and can be confused if not examined carefully. Individuals who are not familiar with bed bugs may also confuse ticks with either immature or adult bed bugs. Bird or rodent mites can bite occupants of structures and can also be easily confused with first instar bed bugs.

Once it has been confirmed that the sample is in fact a cimicid, it is essential that the samples be properly identified to determine which species is infesting the structure. One cannot assume it is a bed bug just because it looks like a bed bug. Bed bugs, bat bugs,



Comparison of bed bugs versus immature cockroaches. The bed bugs in the photo are circled; the two immature cockroaches are not circled. (Richard Cooper)

and bird bugs are all very similar in appearance and require careful examination for correct identification.

Observation of the bugs' behavior can be helpful in tipping off the pest professional they may be dealing with something other than a bed bug. For example, an alternate host should be suspected when bugs are readily seen on the walls, ceiling, or wall ceiling junctions, but are absent from sleeping areas, and the occupants are not reporting being bitten. While these clues are reason to suspect bird bugs or bat bugs, samples should be collected for positive identification.

If bats, chimney swifts, swallows, pigeons or poultry are serving as the primary host, different control measures will be required than would be for common bed bugs or tropical bed bugs.



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Rentokil CEO Andy Ransom to Retire by Year's End

LONDON — Rentokil announced on May 7 that CEO Andy Ransom will retire by the 2026 annual general meeting (AGM), after 17 years on the board, including 12 as CEO. The search for his successor is underway and being led by Chair Richard Solomons.

Solomons praised Ransom in a press release for having created a global leader in pest control. "Rentokil Initial is well placed within an industry that has attractive and sustainable growth drivers," he said. "The company has exceptional long-term growth prospects but short term our priority is on turning around the under performing North American business. Andy is very focused on this task and will ensure a smooth handover when a new chief executive is appointed."

Ransom started his career as a transactional lawyer at Imperial Chemical Industries (ICI), working in countries such as

Canada and the U.S. He later moved into business management roles within the company. After ICI was acquired in 2007, Ransom joined Rentokil in 2008 with two former colleagues. He held several leadership positions, including overseeing the Asia Pacific region, before becoming CEO.

Ransom's signature acquisition in North America was in October 2022 when Rentokil Initial completed its acquisition of Terminix Global Holdings in an 80% stock and 20% cash (\$1.3 billion) deal. While this acquisition allowed Rentokil to overtake Rollins as the largest pest control provider in North America, it's not come without challenges. In September 2024, Rentokil Initial reported slow sales in North America, which caused its share price to drop 18%. And in June 2024, Nel-



Andy Ransom

son Peltz's Trian Fund Management acquired a "significant claim" in Rentokil Initial; later that year Brian Baldwin of Trian Partners joined Rentokil's board of directors, a move seen as increasing Trian's ability to influence the company and its shareholders.

In a press release, Ransom said it was "a great privilege" to lead Rentokil Initial the last 12 years and he is looking forward to working with his successor to ensure a smooth transition. "For now, I am focused on executing our growth plans in our North America business and expanding in our target markets around the world, so as to leave the company in the best possible shape for the future," he said. "I would like to place on record my thanks to the tens of thousands of colleagues whose hard work and com-

PCO News



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(Left to right) Viking's Barbara Hess, Robert Lagomarsino and James McIntyre; Thomas Andes, Denville Mayor; Kevin Murphy, Morris County COC; and Ben Snyder, Viking.

Viking Pest Control announced the opening of a new branch office in Denville, N.J., enabling the company to better service homes and businesses in Morris, Sussex and Warren counties. Viking partnered with the Morris County Chamber of Commerce to host a ribbon cutting ceremony on May 7.

"We're excited to expand our presence in Northwest New Jersey," said Robert Lagomarsino, branch manager, Viking Pest, Denville, N.J. "For more than 40 years, Viking Pest Control has built a reputation for reliable, eco-friendly service that homeowners and businesses can count on. By opening a

local branch in the area, we'll be able to respond faster, support our community more directly and continue delivering the high-quality pest management our customers have come to expect."

Universal Pest & Termite announced the expansion of its operations to Yorktown, Va. This expansion will allow the company to serve the entire peninsula, including Newport News, Hampton and Williamsburg.

AAAC Wildlife Removal of Nashville, Tenn., announced a new chapter under the ownership of Jim and Dawn Adams. The Adamses began



Dawn and Jim Adams

their journey in nuisance wildlife management after relocating to Mobile, Ala., in 2016, turning their passion into a family-driven business. AAAC Wildlife Removal of Nashville is fully licensed and insured to handle both residential and commercial work.

Arrow Exterminators recently held the company's annual Pinnacle Club award trip in New Orleans, La., to recognize the company's top producing service professionals and inside sales



Highlights from Arrow Exterminators' recent Pinnacle Club award trip.

specialists. This achievement is earned by reaching goals set for sales and outstanding service efforts. The Pinnacle Club also recognizes members of Arrow's management team who achieved their safety goals for their service centers for the past fiscal year.

mitment underpin both the many achievements over the last few years and the great potential the company has today.”

Rentokil also announced the appointment of two new non-executive directors — Leanne Sheraton and Sam Mitchell — effective June 1.

Sheraton most recently served as chief marketing officer (2022-2024) for PayPal Holdings. She was responsible for leading marketing across all of PayPal’s brands, where she introduced new channels, capabilities and partnerships, driving a step change in new customer acquisition and growth in customer value.

Mitchell is the former chief executive officer of Valvoline (2016-2023). He served as president of Valvoline since 2002 and led Valvoline’s spin out from Ashland, through its initial public offering (IPO) on the NYSE in 2016. Mitchell joined Ashland in 1997 and his experience includes marketing, brand management and general management.

Rentokil Initial also announced in May that two current non-executive directors will be stepping down from the board. Linda Yueh enters her ninth year of service with the company in 2025 and will not be standing for re-election as a non-executive director at the 2026 AGM. Sarosh Mistry has decided to step down as a non-executive director at Rentokil, effective July 31. — *Brad Harbison*

Neighborhood Continuing Invasive Pest Fight

SACRAMENTO, Calif. — For more than 20 years, Neighborly Pest Management in Sacramento, Calif., has stepped up to work with various counties in North Central California to eradicate glassy-winged sharpshooters, an invasive leafhopper pest that vectors the bacterium that causes Pierce’s disease — a disease that kills grapevines.

When PCT first reported on this issue in



Neighborly Pest Management is working to eradicate glassy-winged sharpshooters, an invasive leafhopper pest that vectors the bacterium that causes Pierce’s disease — a disease that kills grapevines.

2021, Neighborly Pest Management was working with the Solano County Department of Agriculture to eradicate the pests from vineyards and wineries in North Central California.

At the time, there were no reports of sharpshooters invading Northern Califor-

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nia properties; the goal was to prevent the pests from spreading up north.

Four years later, Neighborly President Jim Steed said the invasive pests have now moved north of Sacramento, specifically El Dorado County, with confirmed reports in neighborhoods from nursery plant material brought up from Southern California nurseries.

Sharpshooters are about 1/2-inch long and can move quickly, Steed said.

"Once it gets established, it's pretty effective at reproducing and moving large distances, so we just started the eradication process in Northern California," he said. "Each county has these extensive surveys that they do and when inspectors find activity, if it's a large treatment area, they need a contractor to do treatments on host materials."

The glassy-winged sharpshooter thrives on most landscaping plants and vegetation (e.g., citrus, jasmine and crape myrtle trees).

Comings & Goings

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



Rand

Yunez

Carrothers

Welch

Prentice

Cleary

Urhahn

Rose Pest Solutions, Northfield, Ill., announced the promotion of **Curtis Rand** to president and **Dan Yunez** to vice president of finance.

SiteOne Landscape Supply announced **Dan Carrothers** as its new vice president for agronomic business development. He has more than 35 years of industry experience.

The Clendenin Anthony Partnership recently added **Joe Welch**. Welch brings more than four decades of experience in the lawn care industry, including leadership roles at Middleton Lawn and Pest Control where he developed agronomic programs and managed operations across 36 offices.

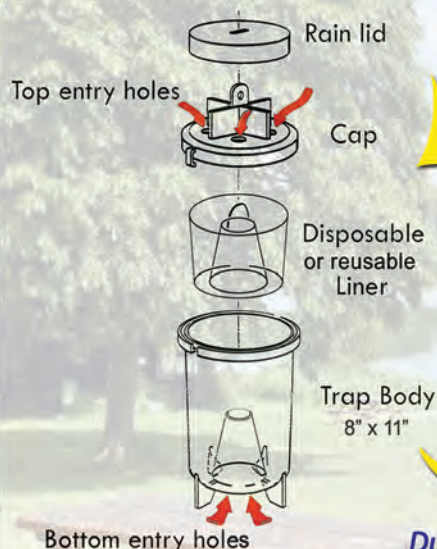
MGK named **Kris Prentice** vice president of sales and marketing. She has more than 20 years of sales and marketing experience.

NaturZone, Sarasota, Fla., announced the promotions of **Aly Herbst** to vice president of admin support, **Sean Cleary** to vice president of operations, **Sara Fus** to business analyst, **Joe Lacross** to service manager for the Greater Sarasota Area, and **Kevin Byrne** to sales consultant.

Douglas Products has added **Johan Urhahn** as sales operations director. Urhahn will be responsible for driving business growth and optimizing sales initiatives.

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Steed said the program in Solano County has almost produced complete eradication, but sharpshooters have been popping up in adjoining counties.

"We're the only contractor working on it, and our customer is the county agriculture department, so you really have to

know your [treatment]," he said. "We've gotten to know our regulators pretty well, and we worked with one county to produce a mock inspection video for training purposes."

Although sharpshooters have moved to Northern California and more treatments

need to be done, Steed said these treatments are working in the various counties Neighborly has treated.

"Neighborly has been pretty successful in the treatment, and it makes other counties feel more comfortable working with us," he said. —Amanda Joerndt



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OSU Research Aims to Pin Down Process of West Nile Virus Transmission

COLUMBUS, Ohio — Mosquitoes have been transmitting the West Nile virus to humans in the United States for more than 25 years, but researchers still don't know precisely how the virus cycles through these pests and the other animals they bite.

A federally funded project aims to help pin down the process by using mathematical models to analyze how factors like temperature, light pollution and bird and mosquito abundance affect West Nile virus transmission. The ultimate goal is to advise health departments of the best time of year to kill the bugs.

"I'm hopeful that what we will uncover in this grant will help us to better understand what's driving West Nile virus transmission, and seasonal cycles of transmission, so we can determine when and where to direct control interventions to limit transmission and keep people healthy," said Megan Meuti, principal investigator (PI) on the grant and associate professor of entomology at The Ohio State University.

The project, based on Ohio data but structured to develop models adaptable to other U.S. regions, is funded by a \$3 million grant from the Ecology and Evolution of Infectious Disease program through the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases.

Previous research gives us a general idea of how and when viral transmission occurs: As days get shorter, female mosquitoes from the *Culex* genus, known carriers of WNV, prepare for the winter dormancy period called diapause by fattening up on nectar from flowers — though they may take a viral infection they caught from birds with them into their winter downtime. After mosquitoes emerge from diapause in warmer months, more of them may become infected by taking blood

meals from infected birds, and then transmit the virus when they feed on people, horses and other mammals.

Among the questions asked by Meuti's team: How does viral transmission re-initiate each spring, and how does the virus's presence persist in the environment during fall and winter? — *Source: The Ohio State University*

Rollins Reports Q1 Revenues Up 9.9% Year Over Year

ATLANTA — Rollins reported in late April that first quarter revenues were \$823 million, an increase of 9.9% over the first quarter of 2024 with organic revenues increasing 7.4%. The stronger dollar versus foreign currencies in countries



where Rollins operate reduced revenues by 40 basis points during the quarter.

Also in the first quarter, Rollins reported operating income of \$143 million, a 7.7% increase over the same period in 2024. Operating margin was 17.3%, a 40 basis point decline year over year. Adjusted operating income rose 6.7% to \$147 million, with an adjusted operating income margin of 17.9%, down 50 basis points from the prior year.

Jerry Gahlhoff Jr., president and CEO of Rollins, said in a press release that first quarter results reflect Rollins' resilient business model and its teammates' ongoing focus on operational excellence. "We continue to invest in our business by focusing on organic demand generation activities, while

M&A News

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Alleymor, doing business as **Pestmaster of the Hudson Valley**, acquired **Catskill Animal Damage Control**, a wildlife management company with 25 years of service in the region.

Mark Charpentier, founder of Catskill ADC, has chosen to semi-retire. Pestmaster of the Hudson Valley, owned by Paul and Amy Alley, is part of the Pestmaster franchise network.

"Mark's reputation for integrity and expertise in wildlife management is something we've admired for years," said Paul Alley. "We are honored to continue the relationships he has built and expand on the high standards of service his clients have come to expect."

Massey Services announced the acquisition of **Insight Pest Solutions** of San Antonio, Texas.

Insight Pest Solutions of San Antonio provides residential pest and termite services to customers in the South Texas market. This acquisition will give Massey Services a total of four service centers in and around San Antonio that provide residential and commercial services to more than 16,000 customers.

Tony Massey, president and CEO of Massey Service, said, "We look forward to providing our Insight San Antonio customers with our environmentally responsible services and commitment to total customer satisfaction."

Plunkett's Pest Control announced its acquisition of **Splat Pest Control**, a locally owned and operated pest management company based in the Northwest Chicago area. Splat Pest Control was founded in 1997 by Joe Kozlowski and has served the Northwest Chicago region for more than 25 years.



Plunkett's Scott Steckel (left) and Jason Foster (right) with Splat Owner Joe Kowlowski.

Good News Pest Solutions announced the acquisition of **B.E. Walsh Pest Control** on April 1. Brian and Lorayne Walsh started the company in 1974 and served their customers for 51 years. Good News Pest Solutions has been servicing the Gulf Coast since 1989 and is still family owned and operated by Dean Burnside. "Our mission is to share God's Good News while solving pest problems with green solutions," he said. "The Walsh acquisition gives us the opportunity to serve over 13,000 customers in our 4-county service area."

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also strengthening the breadth and depth of the Rollins portfolio through strategic M&A like the Saela acquisition we made in April,” he said. “We are thrilled to welcome our Saela teammates to the Rollins family and look forward to the positive contributions they will bring to our business.”

Kenneth Krause, executive vice president and CFO, added that Rollins’ investments in growth “continue to yield results, as organic growth of 7.4% was at the midpoint of our range despite one less business day in the quarter. Our markets remain healthy and we are well-positioned to continue delivering strong results through our robust business model.”

NPMA, Nisus Launch New Excellence in Sustainability Award

FAIRFAX, Va. — The National Pest Management Association (NPMA) announced

the creation of the NPMA Excellence in Sustainability Award, sponsored by Nisus Corporation. This new award will recognize pest management companies demonstrating exceptional commitment to sustainable business practices.

The award will highlight innovative approaches to environmental stewardship including efficient routing, service efficacy, smart office design and other sustainability initiatives specific to the pest management industry.

“As the pest control industry continues to advance efforts around sustainability, NPMA is proud to recognize the positive actions our member companies are implementing to create more environmentally responsible businesses,” said NPMA CEO Dominique Stumpf. “This award will showcase industry leaders who are setting new standards for sustainable pest management practices.”



The award, to be presented annually at NPMA PestWorld, reflects the industry’s growing commitment to environmentally conscious operations, according to NPMA.

“Nisus Corporation is honored to sponsor this important recognition of excellence in sustainability,” said Lee Barrett, chief executive officer/president at Nisus Corporation. “As a company dedicated to developing effective and environmentally responsible pest management solutions, we believe it’s essential to celebrate and promote sustainable practices across our industry. This award aligns perfectly with our commitment to environmental stewardship.”

Nominations are now open and the deadline for submissions is June 30. For additional information about the NPMA Excellence in Sustainability Award, visit www.npmapestworld.org/sustainabilityaward or email npma@pestworld.org.

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PPMA Reveals New 'Bed Bugs Exposed' Video Series

FAIRFAX, Va. — The Professional Pest Management Alliance (PPMA) has launched a new initiative to demonstrate how bed bugs can invade homes and how rapidly a few bed bugs can turn into a widespread infestation. Launched in early May, "Bed Bugs Exposed" is a video series developed in collaboration with the New Orleans Mosquito, Termite and Rodent Control Board (NOMTRCB).

The campaign includes a fully constructed model home — complete with a furnished bedroom and living room — to demonstrate the speed and efficiency with which bed bugs can infiltrate living spaces, penetrating even the smallest crevices and most unexpected hiding places.

"Until you've experienced a bed bug

infestation firsthand, it's hard to comprehend how elusive they are," said Jim Fredericks, executive director of PPMA. "Bed Bugs Exposed" provides an unprecedented, real-world demonstration that shows exactly how these pests operate. It's important to highlight these cryptic pests, as our research shows that only 24% of Americans know what to look for when it comes to a bed bug infestation."

RISE Hosts Breakfast at AMCA for Pesticide Advocacy

SAN JUAN, Puerto Rico — The Responsible Industry for a Sound Environment (RISE), hosted its first-ever "Industry Issues Update" breakfast at the American Mosquito Control Association (AMCA) Annual Meeting in March, bringing together nearly 300 industry professionals, applicators and advocates committed to advancing the specialty pesticide industry.

The AMCA Annual Meeting is an educa-

tion and networking event for researchers, educators, vector control professionals, industry leaders and students in mosquito control. This year's gathering marked a milestone in cross-industry collaboration,



Speakers at the RISE/AMCA annual meeting included (left to right): Keira Lucas, Collier Mosquito Control District; Megan Provost, RISE; Karen Larson, representing Clarke; and Paul Bauman, Toledo Area Sanitary District.

PHOTO COURTESY OF RISE

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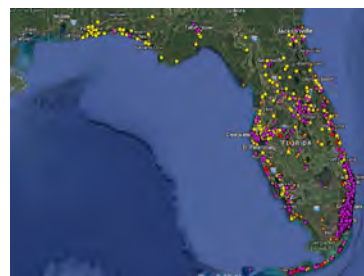
News // JUNE

reinforcing the importance of advocacy in shaping science-driven policies and regulations.

RISE President Megan Provost delivered a call to action, emphasizing the power of collective engagement amid a shifting policy landscape. "We must be thoughtful and strategic as we navigate a new administration, a new Congress and evolving state legislatures," said Provost. "Our strengths lie in uniting our advocacy efforts and making sure decision-makers hear our voices loud and clear."

UF/IFAS Identification Tool Tracks the Spread of Invasive Termites

DAVIE, Fla. — University of Florida researchers have cautioned that an increasing number of communities are now hot spots for invasive termite species, posing significant threats to property and trees.



UF/IFAS's termite map tracking tool can assist Florida PMPs.

To help pest management professionals in Florida stay ahead of termite infestations, scientists at the UF/IFAS Fort Lauderdale Research and Education Center (FLREC) in Davie maintain a publicly accessible online termite distribution map that tracks the spread of termites in real time.

This online termite distribution map is updated regularly by scientists at the center who receive species samples from property owners and certified pest control operators. The map provides property owners with valuable, up-to-date information on which termite species have been detected in a given neighborhood. Learn more about this online tool at <https://bit.ly/3SDibw5>. **PCT**



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State of the **OUTDOORS** MARKET Report

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Pest Control

STARTS ON THE OUTSIDE

Pest control is a comprehensive approach that combines inspections, treatment methods, specialized products and an understanding of insect behavior. At its core, however, effective pest control is about preventing pests from gaining access in the first place.

Outdoors before indoors. Prevention vs. reaction. That's where control truly starts. From fire ants to spiders to outdoor roaches, the battle for outdoor control of pests is a busy and never-ending one.

"You need to catch a pest before it gets in and do that on a consistent basis," said Craig Keller, COO of Alabama's Bohannon Services. "We have a huge number of customers who call for perimeter [services] — insects come from the outside unless you bring them in. It's extremely effective catching them outside. If pests come inside, then customers have to schedule appointments."

In addition to exploring the many opportunities outdoor pest control services offer, this first-ever PCT State of the Outdoors Market report discusses challenges, including weather, customers (expectations and communication) and the environment surrounding a home or building. And these challenges differ depending on location, from a residential subdivision to rural farms (with livestock) to lakefront housing and boat docks.

TAKING IT OUTDOORS. Pest management professionals (PMPs) are committed to providing comprehensive service, with 93% of survey respondents offering both indoor and outdoor pest control. Only 1% reported providing indoor-only services.

Weather may play a role in regional service patterns — PMPs in western



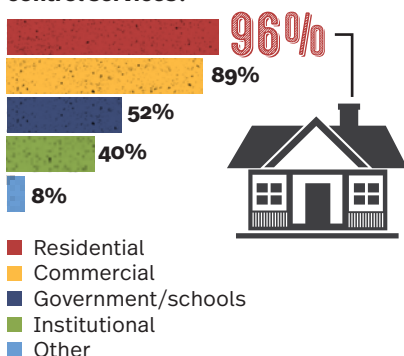
Angel Ramos of Seek Pest Solutions making a perimeter spray application.

states had the highest percentage offering exterior-only treatments, while those in the South, Midwest and Northeast were far less likely to do so.

Outdoor pest control serves a wide range of clients. While 96% of PMPs serve residential customers and 89%

HOMES AND MORE

For which types of accounts does your service location provide outdoor/perimeter/exterior pest control services?



Source: Readex Research; Number of respondents: 149
(Respondents could choose more than one answer)

handle commercial accounts, many also support other sectors. More than half surveyed provide services to government and school facilities and 40% serve institutional clients on a regular basis.

REVENUE INSIGHTS. A strong indicator of the outdoor pest control market's vitality is revenue breakdown by company. Survey participants offered insights into how much of their business is focused on outdoor services.

Only 4% of respondents reported earning 100% of their revenue from outdoor work. However, a significant portion — 36% — said that between 50% and 99% of their company's billings are tied to outdoor pest control.

Not surprisingly, the South and West regions led in outdoor revenues, with more than 20% to 24% of companies in each region reporting that at least three-quarters or more of their income comes from outdoor services. Climate likely plays a major role in these figures.

By contrast, outdoor services are less emphasized in the Midwest. In fact, 28% of respondents there said that 4% or less of their revenue came from outdoor work — possibly due to colder winters that limit year-round outdoor activity, especially in cities like Chicago, Detroit and Cleveland, where indoor pests such as bed bugs may be a greater focus.

One company seeing rapid growth in the outdoor space is Seek Pest Solutions, based in Camden, N.J. Co-founder Angel Ramos launched the business just a year ago with his partners. Seek is already generating six-figure annual revenues, with most of it coming from outdoor work — albeit the company handles indoor treatments as well.

Ramos credits the company's success to a focus on quality over quantity. "We take our time doing it — our service takes 30 to 45 minutes," he said. Comparing it to his previous job, Ramos said, "They had a great model, but they stacked appointments. You had 30 minutes to do a house and be at the next one, doing 14-15 houses per day. [At Seek], maybe we won't make as much profit initially, but we'll provide a service that people will recommend. So far, so good — we've done pretty well with that."

OUTDOOR ONLY. While pest control firms often provide indoor services when needed or requested, 39% of accounts are outdoor-only, according to the survey. The western U.S. stands out, with 64% of companies in that region reporting that at least 30% of their accounts are outdoor-only — the highest percentage by region.

Jason Miller, training, fleet and project manager, Nozzle Nolen Pest Solutions, West Palm Beach, Fla., said his company thrives on outdoor pest control services, ranging from lawn and ornamental treatments to general household pests (GHP), termites, mosquitoes and rodents.

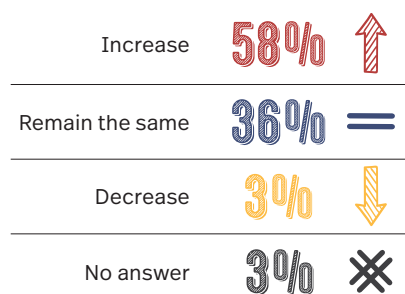
"Outdoor work is our primary source of revenue, and outdoor-only pest control is our most profitable service type," Miller

said. "We're projecting 7.5% growth over the next year."

In Texas, Dallas-based Gecko Pest Control is seeing steady growth, in line with industry averages of 8% to 10%. Owner Daren Horton, A.C.E., expects this momentum to continue as demand for outdoor services rises and operational efficiencies improve through the use of technology and online billing.

BIG EXPECTATIONS

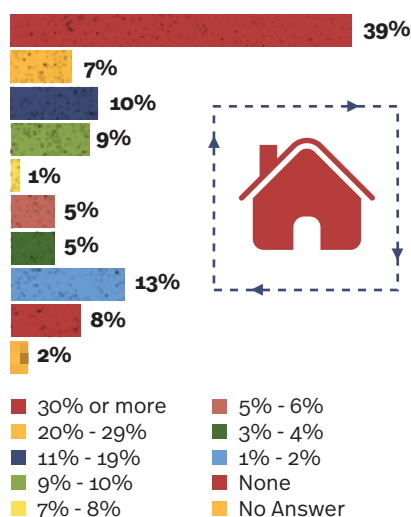
Compared with last year, how do you anticipate revenue generated from your service location's outdoor-only pest control services to change in 2025?



Source: Readex Research; Number of respondents: 149

NO ENTRANCE

What percentage of residential accounts are 100% exterior, meaning service technicians have never entered the interior of the property?



Source: Readex Research; Number of respondents: 143

"We want to be the McDonald's of pest control," Horton said. "When I moved out here, our service was monthly. I transitioned it to a quarterly program."

He emphasized that customers increasingly prefer the predictability of automated payments: "Our customers want something like a Netflix bill, so now 86% of our revenue is recurring."

Horton added that switching from monthly to quarterly services has reduced overhead significantly.

"Going from 12 visits a year to four saves on vehicles, gas and other top-line costs. It's a major shift that saves our customers money, too. They were paying \$50 a month, and now we charge \$90 per quarter."

CAUTIOUSLY OPTIMISTIC.

Doug Foster, owner of Columbus, Ind.-based Burt's Termite and Pest Control, said he is optimistic about 2025. He is with the other 62% of Midwest respondents who say they will generate more revenue performing outdoor work in 2025. Only the Northeast, with 64%, had a more positive response.

"I'm really optimistic," said Foster. "Some base everything on who's in the White House and stuff like that but I don't. I'm very optimistic. I've done this a long time and I won't call it recession-proof but it's the most recession-resistant [business] I've ever seen. People won't go very long without heat and you won't live with bugs for very long either. We've been very blessed."

Others throughout the country share Foster's sentiment. More than one-third of respondents (36%) expect outdoor-only revenue to remain steady. Only 3% forecast a decrease.

"The outdoors is basically the first line of defense," Foster said. "We want to set up a barrier. You can seal up entries with exclusion and protect a garage door seal, but we want to do things that will help with rodents but also roaches and ants and other things that would like to get inside." ●

THE USUAL OUTDOOR *Suspects*

While most pest control professionals are familiar with the common outdoor pests, ranking the top three proves difficult due to regional variation. Pest pressure and types differ significantly by location, making it nearly impossible to create a universal list.

The State of the Outdoors Market Report highlights this inconsistency. When surveyed, 52% of respondents identified nuisance ants (excluding fire ants) as the top pest based on customer calls — indicating that just over half agree on the leading concern. This lack of consensus is largely due to geographic differences.

For example, Aaron Veal, owner/operator of Phoenix Pest Control, Maryville, Tenn., listed his top three pests as spiders, ants and boxelder bugs. He said that effective pest control involves both action and education.

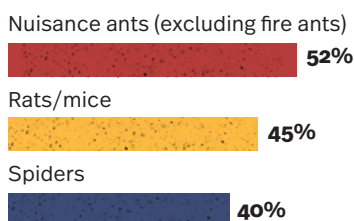
“We’re half ‘killers’ and half educators,” Veal said. “Many companies overload technicians with 13-14 stops a day, leaving no time for thorough service. We take the time to investigate conditions, seal gaps and educate clients — even sending follow-up videos to reinforce the information.”

Veal stressed the importance of outdoor treatments. “That’s where the bugs are coming from. Services should focus on the exterior. Why treat the inside if you don’t have to?”

TOP OFFENDERS.

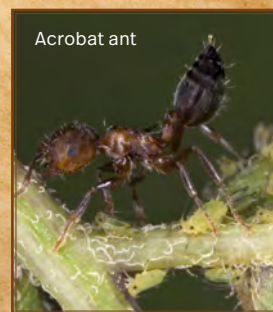
Survey results revealed that, following nuisance ants, rats/mice and spiders round out the top three most-reported pests. Interestingly, rodents were a top concern for 77% of professionals in the western U.S., while only 27% in the South considered them a priority. In the South, mosquitoes and fire ants were cited as frequently — or more often — than rodents,

What are the top three outdoor pests that generate the most service calls in your market area?



Source: Readex Research; Number of respondents: 149
(Respondents could choose up to three responses)

WANTED



reflecting distinct regional pest pressures. Rounding out the top five pests were hornets/wasps and mosquitoes, each selected by 30% of respondents. Again, regional differences were significant: 59% of pest management professionals in the Northeast ranked hornets as a major issue, compared to just 17% in the West. Mosquitoes were considered more problematic in the Midwest and South than in the Northeast or West.

Andy Nieves, vice president of BHB Pest Elimination, New York, N.Y., listed ants, yellowjackets and crickets as his top three pests. He stressed the importance of a thorough inspection before any treatment begins.

“We walk around the home first, checking for toys or anything leaning against the structure,” Nieves said. “That’s often when we find crickets, ants or wasp nests. We also check outdoor bait stations. If there are rodent stations, we’ll clean and refill them.”

PEST PROBLEMS VARY BY REGION.

PCO Billy Blasingame
of Griffin, Ga., ranked
fire ants
as his firm's second
most significant pest.



Billy Blasingame

BHB service professionals also focus on areas where spiders may be active. “We look for webs, check trash bins and treat up to three feet around doorways and about a foot out from the structure,” Nieves said. “Sometimes we’ll treat the trash can itself. The goal is to stop pests before they get inside. Once they’re in, it’s harder. Outside, you can seal gaps with caulk to keep ants and rodents out in the first place.”

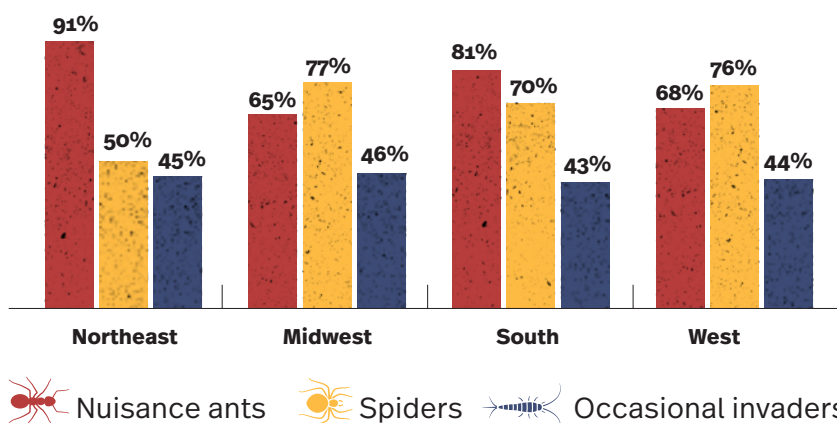
OTHER PROBLEM PESTS.

Survey respondents identified several other pests as top concerns: termites and occasional invaders (such as silverfish, centipedes, Asian lady beetles and scorpions) each were cited by 20%. Peridomestic cockroaches were cited by 16%. Fire ants followed at 13%, fleas at 11% and ticks and flies at less than 10%.

Fire ants illustrate the strong regional differences in pest pressure — 27% of pest management professionals in the South ranked them as a top pest, while they received no mention in other regions. Billy Blasingame, owner of Blasingame Pest Management, Griffin, Ga., is one such Southern PMP who ranked fire ants as his second most significant pest. “With fire ants, customers want immediate results so they don’t see mounds popping up in their yards,” he said. ●

REGIONAL TOP THREE

For residential accounts, what are the top three pests managed by your service location's outside-the-home/perimeter treatment program?



Source: Readex Research; Number of respondents: 149
(Respondents could choose up to three responses)





On the Road Again

YOUR 2025 MAP FOR OUTDOOR PEST CONTROL

With the arrival of spring, pest management professionals (PMPs) are on the road again, quite literally – taking more outdoor calls and revving up for another active season. But this year won't necessarily be business as usual. Evolving regulations and shifting market dynamics are challenging professionals to adapt their treatment approaches.

With changes on how pyrethroids are used, increasing insect pressures, and erratic weather patterns, staying ahead requires flexibility, precision, and strategic adjustments. Consider this a map to help route your road to success with botanical and Insect Growth Regulator (IGR) solution insights, new regulation takeaways, and more. Buckle up, it's time to hit the road!

NAVIGATING EPA RESTRICTIONS

EPA restrictions on pyrethroids are changing the way PMPs operate. Treatment volumes and application areas are now more targeted, especially on impervious surfaces. Revised labels are reflecting these new guidelines limiting perimeter treatments around homes and structures. For PMPs with an established routine for outdoor treatment services, these new guidelines present an opportunity for precision treatments and/or a new approach.

TARGETED BAND APPLICATIONS

Impervious areas around a building or home openings require targeted band applications. Shifting to botanical solutions offers an alternative strategy. Botanical solutions provide greater flexibility without regulatory limitations, helping maintain compliance while ensuring effective treatments in restricted areas.

WEATHER CONSIDERATIONS

Traditional pyrethroid liquid treatments face limitations if rain is expected within four hours after treatment. Granular formulations offer an alternative solution in these conditions.

NEW TREATMENT STRATEGY INSIGHTS

- Liquid bait stations are making a comeback as an effective, targeted approach.
- Increased use of IGRs enhances long-term pest control.
- Microencapsulated products provide extended efficacy.
- Technicians are incorporating moisture management and habitat modification into their strategies.
- Entry points, gutters, drainage, and irrigation systems are key areas of focus to reduce pest harborage.

ADJUSTING ROUTES AND ROUTINES

Spring brings increased activity for outdoor pests, requiring a focus on microclimates like mulch, tree bark, and perimeter areas. Wasps begin emerging from overwintering sites in attics and exhaust vents. Cluster flies, Asian lady beetles, and other attic insects become active as temperatures rise. Mosquitoes overwinter in culvert pipes and cryptic habitats, making early-season inspections essential.

EVOLVING PROTOCOLS

Many PMPs are adopting a strategy of quarterly exterior treatments with interior visits only as needed. Interior inspections focused on entry points such as doors, windows, vents, crawl spaces, and pipe chases are gaining importance. Monitoring tools help track pest activity and optimize treatment plans.

PRECISION AND FORETHOUGHT IN TECHNICIAN TRAINING

Technicians are encouraged to adjust strategies based on seasonal pest pressure. When pressure is low, inspections and preventative exclusion should take priority as part of an IPM approach. Training of both new and seasoned technicians should emphasize a thorough approach. **After all, you get paid to look where no one else will.**

WELL-MAPPED AND WELL-TESTED PRODUCT SOLUTIONS

Zoëcon Professional Products pioneered IGR technology over 50 years ago, and we have been providing innovative solutions ever since. Our products are designed to enable broad-spectrum, long-term residual control. Check out just a few of the tools we offer professionals to manage insect populations, prevent future infestations, and reduce callbacks:



FORMITROL® ANT BAIT GEL & ANTACK™ LIQUID ANT BAIT

- Part of a suite of outdoor applicable products targeting nuisance ant species.
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- Antack™ Liquid Ant Bait disrupts ants' nervous systems for comprehensive management.

ESSENTRIA® FAMILY OF PRODUCTS - BOTANICALLY BASED, NON-PYRETHROID ALTERNATIVES WITH FEWER REGULATORY LIMITATIONS

- Essentria® IC Pro features a water-based, essential-oil derived formulation that kills and repels a wide range of labeled insects.
- Essentria® Mosquito & Tick Concentrate kills ticks, repels mosquitoes for up to 14 days.
- Essentria® G Granular Insecticide uses botanical insect control power to provide lasting, eco-friendly results.

EXTINGUISH® PLUS FIRE ANT BAIT

- A critical solution for fire ant control, especially in the Southern US where fire ants are prevalent.
- Provides a two-way killing action to eliminate existing colonies and prevent new infestations.

ALTOSID® PROFESSIONAL MOSQUITO CONTROL PRODUCTS

- Pretreat potential mosquito breeding sites with Altosid® Liquid Larvicide Mosquito Growth Regulator.
- Prevent adult mosquito emergence for up to 30 days in standing water with Altosid® Pro-G granular formulation or Altosid® Briquets.

LAMBDA 9.7 CS

An ideal backyard insect control solution, Lambda 9.7 CS features an encapsulated insecticide that will not break down in heat and UV exposure.

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- Combines a proven pyrethroid with an IGR to control flea larvae up to 8 weeks.



THE KEYS TO YOUR NEW APPROACH

Seasonality, moisture conditions, and regulatory shifts demand a more precise, refined approach to pest control. By staying informed and adapting to these changes, PMPs can navigate the evolving outdoor market and continue delivering effective solutions.

Visit zoecon.com

for more information on treatment solutions that can help you stay ahead on the road to outdoor insect control success.



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FORTIFYING THE PERIMETER: *Tools & Treatments*

Outdoor pest control includes a wide range of services and the State of the Outdoors Market Report aimed to better understand what treatments PMPs are providing and how these vary by region.

According to the survey, 93% of professionals offer rodent control — a consistent figure nationwide, with the Western U.S. slightly lower at 88%.

Dennis Mastrolia, owner of Arthropod, Inc., Lynn, Mass., described his approach: “We assess the property, check for entry points, bait around the perimeter and follow up to ensure activity is under control. Then we continue with exclusion work to prevent re-entry.”

CRAWLING/FLYING INSECTS.

Perimeter treatments are offered by 92% of PMPs to control crawling and flying insects, followed closely by hornet and wasp nest removal at 90%. According to the survey, these are the top three outdoor services provided.

Stan Frierson, owner, DAPS Services, Atlanta, offers quarterly treatments primarily for fire ants, mosquitoes, fleas and ticks, along with other pests. “We’ve

perfected our outdoor program,” he said. “We rotate products effectively and use high-quality materials to get it right the first time.”

More than 70% of PMPs provide treatments targeting spiders, termites, mosquitoes, ants and fleas/ticks.

Less common services include broadcast turf treatments (48%), shrub, tree and ornamental care (38%) and wildlife control (36%).

Timing also plays a key role: 71% of PMPs offer outdoor services year-round. Regional differences are notable, with only 36% doing so in the Northeast compared to more than 80% in the South and West.

QUARTERLY TREATMENTS.

Quarterly seems to be the frequency



Seek Pest Solutions’ Angel Ramos applying a dust pesticide.

that most PMPs are providing outdoor pest control, at 65% of those surveyed. In the South, quarterly treatments jump to 83%, almost double what it is in other areas.

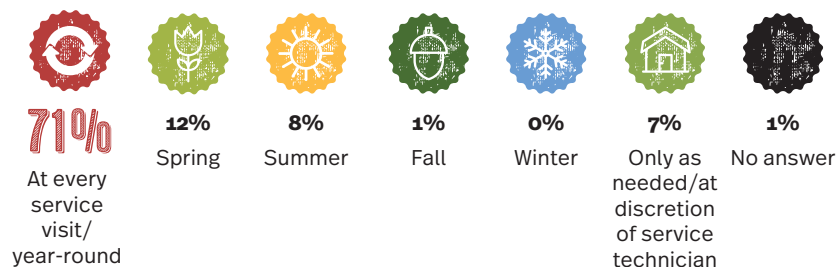
“Some people just aren’t comfortable with people coming into their house, some get embarrassed when we need to tell them how to clean up,” said Dan Lauderback, a former pilot who retired and started up his own firm, Contact Pest Control, in Cleveland.

The State of the Outdoors Market survey also showed the dramatic difference between outdoor and indoor pest control. Across the board, 23% of accounts require PMPs to enter the home, while 64% either only enter when requested or they don’t enter at all.

Mark Hayden, owner of Total Pest Control, Greater Hartford, Conn., said the mantra is simple. “Stop them before they get in,” he said. “Many pest issues can be resolved from the exterior. Customers do not need to be home, which makes scheduling easier.”

YEAR-ROUND SERVICES

For residential accounts, when is your service location’s outside-the-home/perimeter treatment program typically performed?



Source: Readex Research; Number of respondents: 143

PRODUCT TYPES. The survey reveals that PMPs use a variety of products for effective outdoor pest control, with 95% relying on liquids or sprays. Granular baits are used by 78%, and granular pesticides by 64%. Regional differences are evident, with 77% of PMPs in the South using granular pesticides compared to just 40% in the West.

Exclusion was more common than many traditional services, being offered by 54% of surveyed PMPs. This approach reflects Integrated Pest Management (IPM), which combines proactive strategies and a variety of tools.

“As part of IPM, we focus on minimal product use and more exclusion services, like cleaning up the property and removing plants that attract insects,” said Eric McCool, Critter McCool Bee Extractions & Control, Summerville, S.C. “I recommend simplifying landscaping to reduce pest attractants. IPM is about long-term solutions, not just applying products for quick fixes.”

McCool also emphasized the need to focus on outdoor treatments. “Pest control should be exterior-focused unless there’s already an interior issue. Preventing problems before they start is key.”

EQUIPMENT USE. PMPs are using backpack mister/blowers, extension poles and hand-held sprayers two-thirds or more of the time in every area of the country, according to the survey.

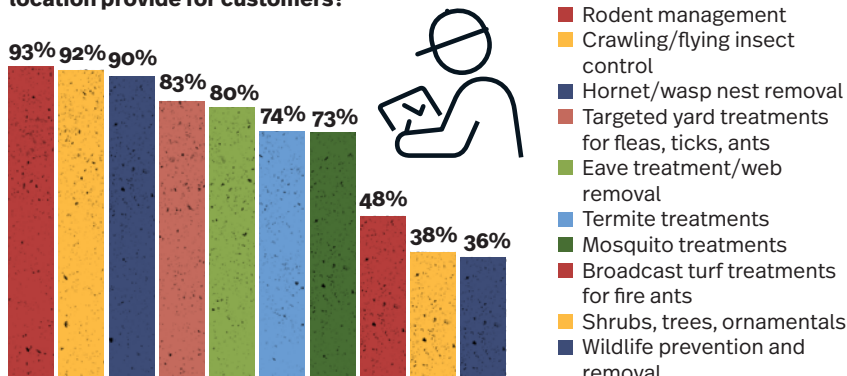
Product usage by region includes the following: 86% of the South uses backpack mister/blowers and 85% in that region led the way for the use of extension poles. Hand-held sprayers are most used in the Northeast by 73% surveyed.

Dusters and truck-mounted rigs are used by 49% and 42% of respondents. Other typical equipment needs like ladders, spreaders, ULVs and riding spreaders are used at lower numbers.

Drones have yet to make an impact on the day-to-day pest control business according to the survey. Only 3% utilized them and only in the South. ●

OUTDOOR OPPONENTS

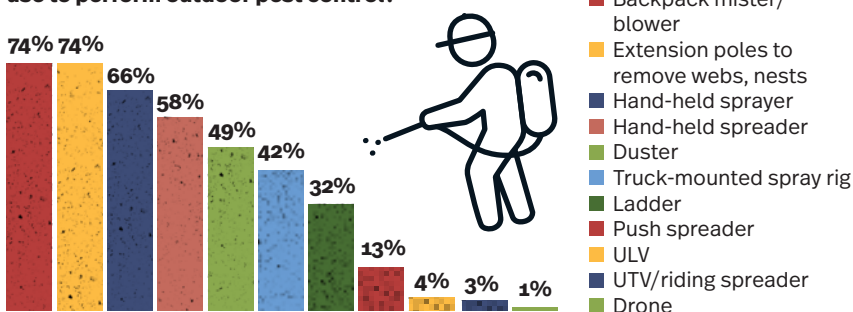
For residential accounts, what types of outdoor pest control treatments does your service location provide for customers?



Source: Readex Research; Number of respondents: 143
(Respondents could choose more than one answer)

EQUIPMENT ESSENTIALS

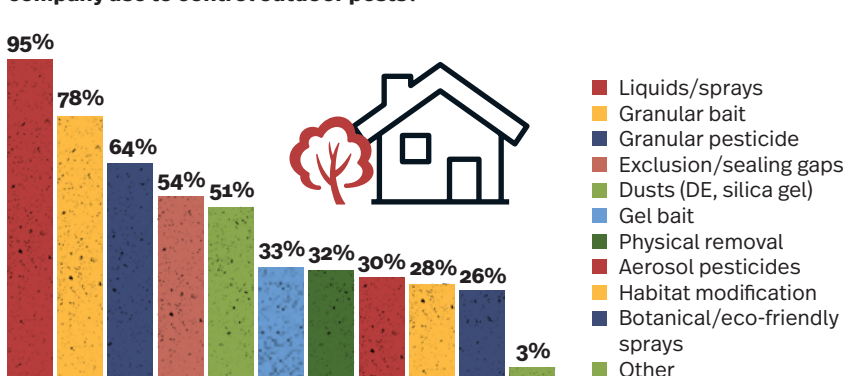
What types of equipment does your service location use to perform outdoor pest control?



Source: Readex Research; Number of respondents: 149
(Respondents could choose more than one answer)

TOOLS OF THE TRADE

What types of products and tactics does your company use to control outdoor pests?



Source: Readex Research; Number of respondents: 149
(Respondents could choose more than one answer)

WHEN MOTHER NATURE SAYS 'Not Today'

Mother Nature is the top challenge for outdoor pest control, with weather conditions often halting work. This is especially true for an industry focused on preventing pests from entering, instead of reacting to them being inside.

Among Midwest PMPs, 54% cited weather as their top challenge, compared to just 17% in the West.

"Weather is a major obstacle," said Jeffrey Emerson, owner of Mosquito Enemy, Newburyport, Mass. "Wind over 12 mph prevents effective spraying, and rain stops us completely. On many days, we can't get much done due to weather conditions."

Other significant challenges include dense vegetation (15%), uncooperative customers (10%), ineffective products (7%) and tree limbs or bushes against buildings (7%).

Mark Sims, owner of Fikes, Federal Way, Wash., noted additional difficulties: "Challenges include customers not eliminating harborage, food and water sources, as well as urban environments with excessive litter. Nearby businesses or environments that can't be altered, like livestock feed or construction disrupting rodent burrows, also contribute to pest issues."

RAINY DAY BLUES. Among weather events that are preventing PMPs from getting outdoor pest control work completed, rainstorms (83%) and high winds (50%) are by far the most obtrusive forms of weather.

Snowstorms and freezing temperatures were both cited by more than 30% of pest management professionals as issues preventing them

40%

of respondents said weather events/temperatures are the most challenging issue their service location faces when performing outdoor pest control services.

Source: Readex Research; Number of respondents: 149

from performing a treatment. Flooding, tornadoes and hurricanes — i.e., atypical weather events — rounded out the lesser percentages of those surveyed as they don't affect people on a daily, weekly or even monthly basis.

"Weather is first and then customer co-operation and that means keeping things in order on the exterior, not letting things overgrow," said Blasingame Pest Management's Billy Blasingame, who added sanitation is necessary for effective pest

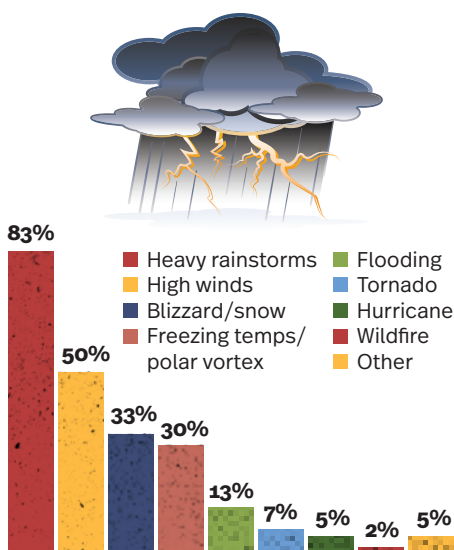
control, but so is remediating issues like standing water and debris that attracts outdoor pests.

Avoiding callbacks is a reason to stop when weather takes over, said Seek Pest Solutions' Ramos. The day he was interviewed for this story, his route was rained out.

"Today's a rainy day so we can move everything to another day but other larger companies, their schedules are packed. I need to get a good treatment when I go there. We don't have callbacks."

WEATHER INTERRUPTERS

Which types of weather events caused the most interruptions of exterior pest control at your service location in the last year?



Source: Readex Research; Number of respondents: 149
(Respondents could choose more than one answer.)

MAN-MADE PROBLEMS.

While weather may affect treatments, Bohannon's Keller said the internet causes its own set of problems when it comes to customers.

"Ironically, today our biggest challenge is the internet because people can research things and that means people can research themselves stupid," Keller said. "You can find something that said grape jelly [moves] fire ants away from around your house. The availability of quick info is a hindrance sometimes."

Keller noted another challenge: customers often expect immediate results. Integrated Pest Management (IPM) strategies and baiting are approaches that typically require more time — something that customers might not tolerate. "(We) want to get to the root of the problem." ●

Getting the OUTDOOR MESSAGE OUT

ABOUT THIS SURVEY

The PCT 2025 State of the Outdoors Market survey was sponsored by Zoëcon/Central Life Sciences and compiled by Readex Research, a privately held research firm located in Stillwater, Minn. A sample of 4,989 owners, executives, technical directors, general and branch managers was systematically selected from the PCT database. Data was collected from 150 respondents — a 3% response rate — via online survey from March 5-20, 2025. To best represent the audience of interest, the majority of results are based on the 149 respondents whose service location provides outdoor pest control services. The margin of error for percentages based on these 149 usable responses is plus or minus 8.0 percentage points at the 95% confidence level. Charts may not add up to 100% due to rounding.



Reaching customers cost-effectively is a top priority for PMPs, especially for outdoor-only pest services. However, only 37% of survey respondents actively market these services. In the West, where warmer weather prevails, 53% promote outdoor services, but in other regions, the number drops to 35% or less.

Despite these figures, many PMPs contacted by PCT shared that they do actively promote their outdoor services.

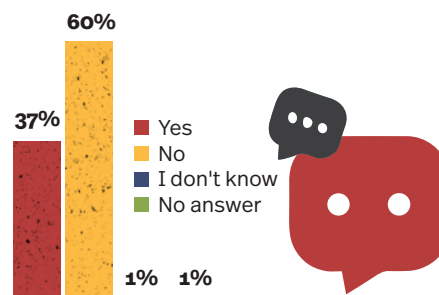
Phoenix Pest's Veal leverages YouTube. "I create videos, share them on social media and target neighborhood groups on platforms like Twitter and Facebook," he said.

BHB's Nieves takes a unique marketing approach to outdoor pest control. "We focus on driving organic traffic through Google and use an app to encourage technicians to collect five-star reviews, offering customers \$10 gift cards as incentives," Nieves said.

Gecko Pest's Horton emphasized the value of traditional methods. "We're active in local groups like Rotary and the chamber of commerce. Word of mouth is crucial, especially in smaller towns," he said. "Having a savvy marketing team that understands the seasons and targets the right services...is key."

SHOUTING IT FROM THE ROOFTOPS

Does your service location actively market its outdoor-only service?



Source: Readex Research; Number of respondents: 149

Arthropod Inc.'s Mastrolia focuses on relationships. "We do some internet and social media marketing, but most of our business comes from word of mouth. We're highly recommended by local real estate agents," he said. "When customers call, they often mention a recommendation."

Tanner Bigler, owner, SafeChem Pest, Clearfield, Utah, said residential customers are most receptive to marketing.

"Clear communication is essential. Setting the right customer expectations is critical in our industry," he said. ●

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TARGET OUTDOOR INSECTS WITH PRECISION AT ZOECON.COM

PMPs Pack D.C. to Push Preemption

A record attendance at NPMA Legislative Day underscores industry's unity, urgency on pesticide preemption.

Rollins' Bonnie Rabe leads discussions with Georgia attendees.



Above: As part of an Envu-sponsored session, Washington Post columnist Eugene Robinson (pictured) presented the Democrat position during a friendly debate with pundit Doug Heye. **Left:** Sarah Isgur, senior editor at The Dispatch, spoke during a session sponsored by Control Solutions.

By Brad Harbison and Amanda Joerndt

A record number of pest management professionals (PMPs) gathered in the nation's capital in March for the National Pest Management Association's (NPMA) Legislative Day, where they focused their advocacy on the importance of federal pesticide preemption.

NPMA CEO Dominique Stumpf praised the strong turnout as a reflection of the industry's dedication. "Your presence here not only strengthens our collective voice on Capitol Hill, but also shows the unity and resolve of our industry as we advocate for issues that affect our businesses and the communities we serve," she said.

PCT and BASF presented the 2024 Technician of the Year Awards to (left to right): Chad Gilbert, Northwest Exterminating, Marietta, Ga. (residential); Dylan Blasingame, Blasingame Pest Management, Griffin, Ga. (commercial); and Tim Elliott, Augustine Exterminators, Overland Park, Kan.



NPMA Senior Director of Public Policy JD Darr provided important regulatory updates and facilitated discussions.

THE PREEMPTION PUSH. The central issue at this year's event was pesticide preemption. PMPs met with lawmakers, including many newly elected in November, to push for federal legislation that would codify the role of state agencies as co-regulators of pesticides alongside the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). This policy is expected to be included in the next version of the Farm Bill.

Currently, 45 states have pesticide preemption laws in place, meaning that their state lead agencies — typically within state agriculture departments — have worked with the EPA since the 1970s under the Federal Insecticide, Fungicide, and Rodenticide Act (FIFRA). These agencies help enforce science-based labeling and pesticide use standards.

However, five states — Alaska, Maine, Maryland, Minnesota and Nevada — do

not have such laws, resulting in a patchwork of local regulations that can create compliance challenges for pest control companies operating across multiple jurisdictions.

JD Darr, NPMA's senior director of public policy, emphasized the inefficiencies and risks of local-level pesticide regulation. "There is often no public engagement process, regulations vary greatly and are inconsistently enforced, and many local governments lack the resources and personnel to create sound, science-based policies," he said.

Darr noted the importance of urgent advocacy as the Farm Bill is expected to be introduced later this year.

POLICY DISCUSSIONS. During a luncheon sponsored by Envu, high-profile political speakers and commentators

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Q&A WITH

Jacob Kulzer

AT NPMA LEGISLATIVE DAY, Jacob “Jake” Kulzer, vice president of operations, North America, at Ecolab, was presented with the 2025 David Cooksey PestVet of the Year Award. During a military career spanning more than 20 years, Kulzer rose to the ranks of lieutenant colonel. He served as a field artillery officer and civil military operations leader during two years in Iraq. At Ecolab, Kulzer leads more than 3,000 associates who service more than 200,000 customer locations. PCT’s Brad Harbison caught up with Kulzer to learn more about his military background and his work at Ecolab.

BH: After such a long, illustrious military career, how did you make your way to Ecolab?

JK: As I approached 20 years of active federal service, I attended a benefit dinner for the Minnesota Military Family Foundation where Ecolab was the title sponsor. I didn’t get the chance to meet [Ecolab President and COO] Tom Hanley at the event, but I sent him a note the next day introducing myself and asking if he’d be willing to offer some career advice. Tom graciously accepted, invited me to lunch, and that marked the beginning of my Ecolab journey. I was hired shortly thereafter.

BH: How have the skills you developed in the military translated to pest control?

JK: I remember my first day at Ecolab, meeting the managers who would report to me. They asked what I knew about pest control. I said, ‘Not much.’ Chemicals? ‘Also not much.’ They asked, ‘So what do you know?’ I looked at the team and said, ‘OK, you’ve got a crew of 15, some direct reports, and you go to a site in uniform, drive a vehicle, eliminate threats and write a report afterward.’ They said, ‘That’s pretty accurate.’ I responded, ‘Well, my job is to prioritize your tasks, ensure you have the resources you need, advocate for you up the chain and make sure we’re aligned with company goals. Sound about right?’ They agreed. I told them, ‘I think I’ve got this — and at least



Jacob Kulzer, the 2025 David Cooksey Pest Vet of the Year.



no one’s shooting at us here.’ That moment helped bridge my military experience with the new role. Leadership fundamentals from the Army — structure, discipline and listening — have been crucial. I learned as both an enlisted soldier and an officer the importance of listening to my NCOs [non-commissioned officers]. That same principle applies at Ecolab: listen to the field, trust their expertise and support them to be successful.

BH: You’re also involved with PestVets. Can you talk about that experience and why the group is important?

JK: I’m a relatively new member of PestVets, having joined this year, but it’s already been a rewarding experience. When you’re in the military, there’s a lot of inter-service rivalry — Army vs. Navy, Navy vs. Air Force — but once you’re out, you’re all part of one community. PestVets brings that community together. We share a common value system and a commitment to service, whether that’s supporting each other, helping grow our businesses or protecting the communities we serve. It’s a powerful network with a shared purpose.

BH: You received the David Cooksey PestVet of the Year Award. What does that recognition mean to you?

JK: It’s incredibly humbling. I come from a family with a long history of military service, so being recognized — especially among so many deserving veterans — is a true honor. I’m grateful for the acknowledgment and committed to paying it forward and giving back however I can.



offered analysis of current events and the legislative climate. Darr moderated a lively discussion between Washington Post columnist Eugene Robinson and Republican political consultant Doug Heye. The two debated the early days of Donald Trump’s second term and the role of key advisers

like Elon Musk. Heye questioned Musk’s long-term influence, saying, “If your last name isn’t Trump, your relationship with him tends to go south eventually.” Robinson critiqued Trump’s address to Congress as lacking clarity and coherence.

Later, in a session sponsored by Corte-

va, Politico columnist Jonathan Martin, co-author of “This Will Not Pass,” spoke on how technology has influenced political polarization. Martin warned attendees about relying on unfiltered information from social media. “When you’re surrounded by a sea of saltwater looking for a



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In a session sponsored by Corteva, Politico columnist Jonathan Martin spoke on how technology has influenced political polarization.

drink, it's tempting to dip into any kind of water — but a lot of it lacks credibility," he said. He encouraged PMPs to seek information from reputable sources with editorial oversight.

Sarah Isgur, senior editor at The Dispatch, spoke during a session sponsored by Control Solutions. Isgur discussed the shifting of policy power from Congress to the executive branch and encouraged industry leaders to keep pressing lawmakers directly. "The Hill is where the power is supposed to be. If we want sustainable change, we need to focus our efforts there," she said.







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“When you’re surrounded by a sea of saltwater looking for a drink, it’s tempting to dip into any kind of water — **but a lot of it lacks credibility.”**

—Jonathan Martin, Politico columnist

VOICES FROM CAPITOL HILL. At the MGK-sponsored “Headquarters on the Hill” event, U.S. Sen. Ben Ray Luján and Rep. Gabe Vasquez, both from New Mexico, spoke on the importance of federal support for public health and pest control efforts.

Vasquez raised concerns about proposed Farm Bill funding cuts. “We’re looking at \$280 billion in potential cuts, so we need to ensure the regulations in pest control

are uniform and business-friendly,” he said.

Luján urged attendees to keep advocating and emphasized the importance of collaboration, regardless of political affiliation. “You don’t ask who someone voted for when they call needing help — you respond,” he said. “That’s the spirit we need in policymaking, too.” **PCT**

The authors are senior news editor and digital editor of PCT.



U.S. Sen. Ben Ray Luján at the MGK “Headquarters on the Hill” event.



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TOP 10

THINGS TO KNOW ABOUT MARKETING YOUR PEST CONTROL BUSINESS

Today's pest control operators face rising costs, shifting customer expectations and fierce local competition. These 10 insights can help you scale smarter, market better and position your company for long-term success.

1

DIY Isn't Going Away – Yet

Fifty-four percent of homeowners still try to handle pest problems themselves. It's a missed opportunity, and a chance to educate them on why professional, preventative treatment works better, lasts longer and saves money in the long run.

2

Your Website Is Your Digital Front Door

Whether someone found you on Google or by knocking on their door, they're checking your website. Make sure it's fast, mobile-friendly and built to convert visitors into customers.

3

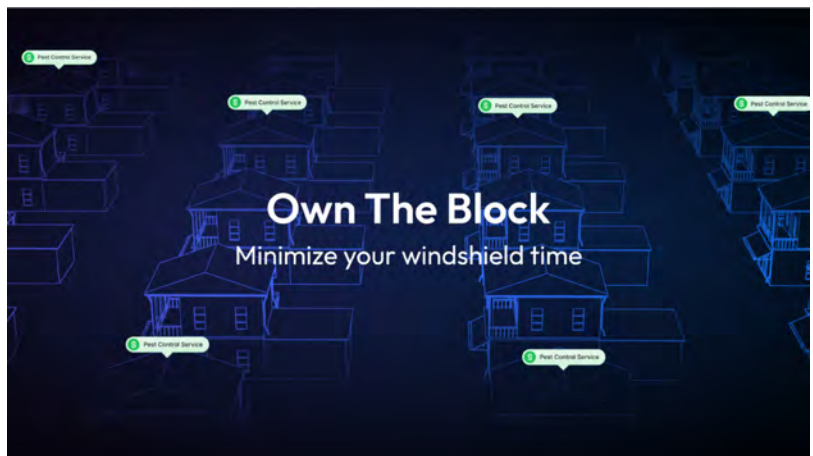
Recurring Services = Recurring Revenue

Only 10% to 14% of homeowners use recurring pest control services — a massive market gap. Scorpion helps PCOs promote maintenance plans that build monthly stability and long-term customer relationships.

4

Most Consumers Want More Than Just Pest Control

Nearly 40% of homeowners want bundled services — like mosquito control, termite prevention or lawn



care. Position your business as a total home solution, not just a one-time fix.

5

Reviews Make or Break Trust

Sixty-four percent of consumers won't consider a provider with less than a four star rating. With Scorpion, you can request, manage and promote reviews that reinforce your expertise and service quality.

6

Gen Z & Millennials Switch Fast

Younger homeowners are open to hiring professionals — but they're also more likely to switch providers. Make it easy to communicate via text, chat or app, and stay top of mind year-round.

7

Speed Still Wins

When 54% of consumers choose a provider in under four hours, your ability to respond quickly, even after hours, could be the difference between a booking and missed opportunity.

8

Every Ad Should Lead to ROI

Marketing isn't about traffic — it's about revenue. With tools like Scorpion's RevenueMAX, pest companies can track every lead, from Google search to scheduled service, and know what's actually working.

9

Local Visibility Matters

Whether you're knocking on doors or building routes, social retargeting and LSAs help you dominate the zip codes that matter most — without wasting money on low-value areas.

10

Your Marketing Should Work as Hard as You Do

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Kelly Aldrich
Co-Owner, All Pest of Syracuse



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AUTO INSURANCE

By Bob Sandrick



COVERAGE CRISIS



Insurance premiums continue to rise due to natural disasters, crashes and claims, among other causes. PMPs and other industry professionals say there's still hope — but it'll cost you time and effort.

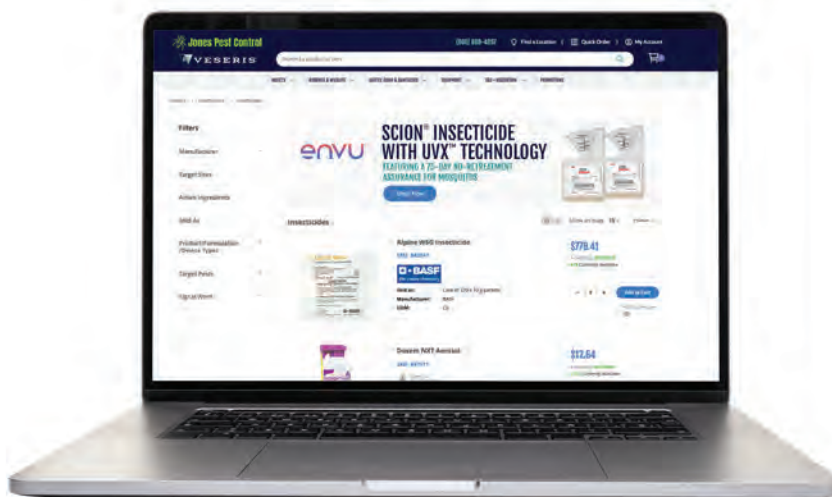
While insurance isn't the topic anyone is anxious to discuss, it's on the minds of pest control business owners — especially as premiums rise.

As reported in PCT's January cover story, "What Keeps You up At Night," PCT and National Pest Management Association (NPMA) research revealed that 63% of respondents said insurance is the most difficult expense to manage. The level of worry over insurance costs exceeds that of any other factor, including workers' compensation, benefits and fleet maintenance.

AUTO INSURANCE. PMPs are concerned about general liability and property insurance rates, even while premiums have remained relatively stable.



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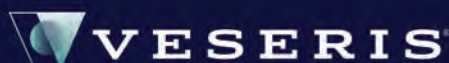
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Some property insurers are hiking rates to make up for losses caused by the California wildfires and other natural disasters.



However, auto insurance was flagged as the real headache. Auto premiums have skyrocketed for all service industries that utilize vehicle fleets. In some cases, policies have been canceled or simply are not available.

“The auto insurance market is the hardest we’ve ever seen,” said Andy McGinty, CEO of LIPCA, a Baton Rouge, La., firm owned by, and providing insurance for, PMPs. “We have never seen it this bad regarding cost and availability.”

Auto premiums are rising due to an increased number of crashes and claims, caused largely by distracted drivers texting on their phones, according to McGinty. Meanwhile, some property insurers are hiking rates to make up for losses caused by the California fires and hurricanes in the South.

Also, as home insurance premiums climb, some existing and prospective PMP customers are hesitant to buy preventive termite treatments, although that’s not always the case. “People want to protect their homes and will pay for it,” said John Culotta, program manager at PCopro, the pest management arm of Brownyard Group, a Bay Shore, N.Y., insurance company.

With these challenges in mind, there are steps PMPs can take to reduce their insurance costs, but not without a little time and effort.

HIKING THE PRICE. Daniel Banting, vice president of external operations at Native Pest Management, Tallahassee, Fla., said he was shocked when he prepared to renew his auto insurance for 2025.

Native Pest Management stayed with the same insurance company for nearly 10 years, always receiving an affordable rate. This year, however, the premium was set to double, then rise by between 120-130% in subsequent years. Banting decided to look elsewhere for insurance.

Brian Goldman, CEO of Big Blue Bug Solutions in Providence, R.I., said his auto insurance premium spiked by about 25% for his fleet of about 100 trucks, calling the increase “substantial.”

For Chris Caire, vice president of DA Exterminating in Metairie, La., auto insurance costs have risen by about 20% since 2020.

Auto insurance has become more expensive for any company with a fleet of vehicles — not just PMPs — said Todd Burke, CEO of PestSure, a Dallas, Texas,

insurance provider for the pest management industry. “People with clean risk still see an increase but on the low end, maybe 10%,” Burke said. “But if you’ve had losses, get ready for a severe increase or potential non-renewal of the policy.”

McGinty said his firm, LIPCA, has never offered auto insurance, though he is aware of other carriers that are now pulling out of the auto market.

“I don’t know of any true insurance carrier that has lasted in our industry between 8-10 years, and that did auto, that is still doing it,” McGinty said. “They all got killed. They’re walking away.”

The consensus is that an increased number of auto insurance claims is the main culprit. However, Culotta said other factors include overall inflation and general economic fluctuations.

Burke said the cost of reinsurance — which insurance companies purchase to cover them in case they don’t have enough cash to pay claims — also has crept up and some insurers have passed that expense onto their customers.

LIABILITY AND PROPERTY. Banting, Caire and Goldman all said their general

/// continued on page 62

2025 STATE OF THE SMALL FLY CONTROL MARKET



INSIDE

- Why Experience Matters
- Growing the Service
- Common Fly Species
- Treatment Strategies
- Exclusive Research!

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EXPERIENCE MATTERS

If you're in the pest control industry, there's a chance you'll have to deal with small flies — think fruit flies, drain flies and phorid flies — throughout your career.

Although it may not be a major part of your company's overall revenue, it's a vital service that some of your clients depend on.

"Knowing how to control small flies is extremely important," said Andy Nieves, vice president, BHB Pest Elimination, New York, N.Y. "For many restaurants in New York, even one fly can be detrimental if they get a bad review."

While 95% of pest management professionals (PMPs) reported their company offers services to control small flies, only 4.9% of revenue was generated by small fly services, according to PMPs who participated in the 2025 PCT State of the Small Fly Control Market survey.

"It's just not every day that we get a call about small fly control," said Matt Henderson, vice president, Country Boy Pest Control, Winter Haven, Fla. "And when we do, we try to educate our customers how to prevent fly issues by focusing on the role of cleanliness and sanitation. That's what we preach."

Customer education and cooperation remains one of the biggest issues PMPs encounter when treating for small flies.

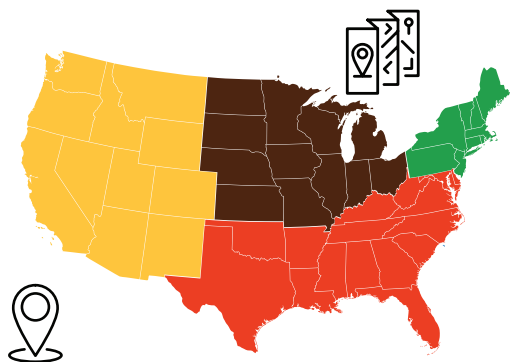
While PMPs are more than ready to dole out knowledge on small flies, many customers struggle or are reluctant to improve sanitation conditions. This can lead to repeated service calls and frequent treatments.

In fact, 52% of PMPs said they've turned a one-time small fly-only customer into a recurring pest control client.

"The most common issue — whether it's drain flies, fruit flies or fungus gnats — is the sanitation or the environment of a location that's giving these small flies an opportunity to breed and grow," said Zachary Hall, service supervisor, Thomas Pest Services, Schenectady, N.Y.

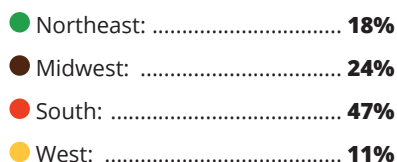
While customer education is essential, it all starts with PMPs and their expertise. Being able to identify the type of fly causing your client issues — and how to successfully treat and prevent — can mean having a lifelong customer.

"If you're new to pest control, or a seasoned professional who has never dealt with small flies, once you start noticing a small problem, address it right then and don't let it get out of control," said Melisa Arnold, owner, Horizon Pest Solutions, New Cambria, Kan. "As with anything in pest control, the longer you wait to try to control it, the harder it is and the more money it costs you and your client." •



WHERE YOU WORK

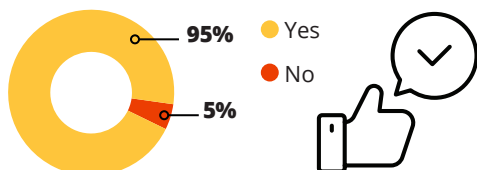
PMPs who participated in the 2025 PCT State of the Small Fly Control Market survey worked in the following regions:



Source: Readex Research; Number of respondents: 123

YES TO SMALL FLIES

Does your service location offer services to control small flies (fruit flies, drain flies, phorid flies, etc.)?

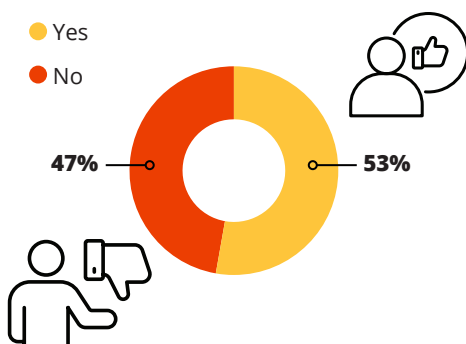


Source: Readex Research; Number of respondents: 123

INCLUDED AND STAND-ALONE

Are small flies included as part of your service location's general pest control (GPC) service?

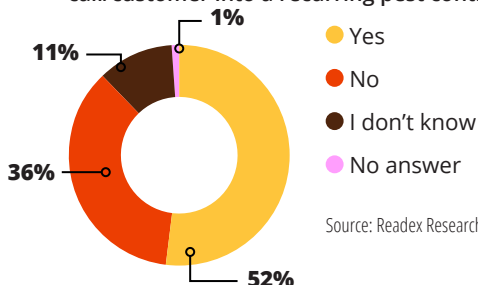
- Yes
- No



Source: Readex Research; Number of respondents: 117

RECURRING OPPORTUNITY

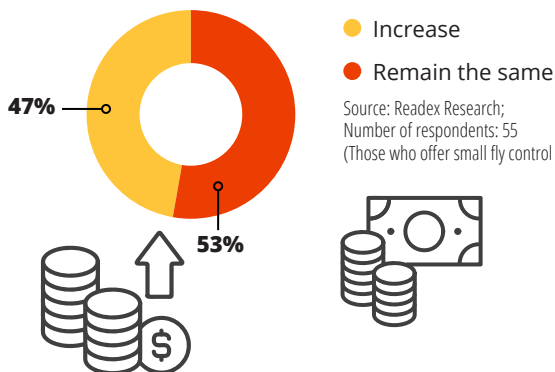
Has your service location ever grown a small fly-only call/customer into a recurring pest control customer?



Source: Readex Research; Number of respondents: 117

PRICE CONSISTENCY

Compared with 2024, do you expect the price that your service location charges for small fly control service to increase, remain the same or decrease in 2025?

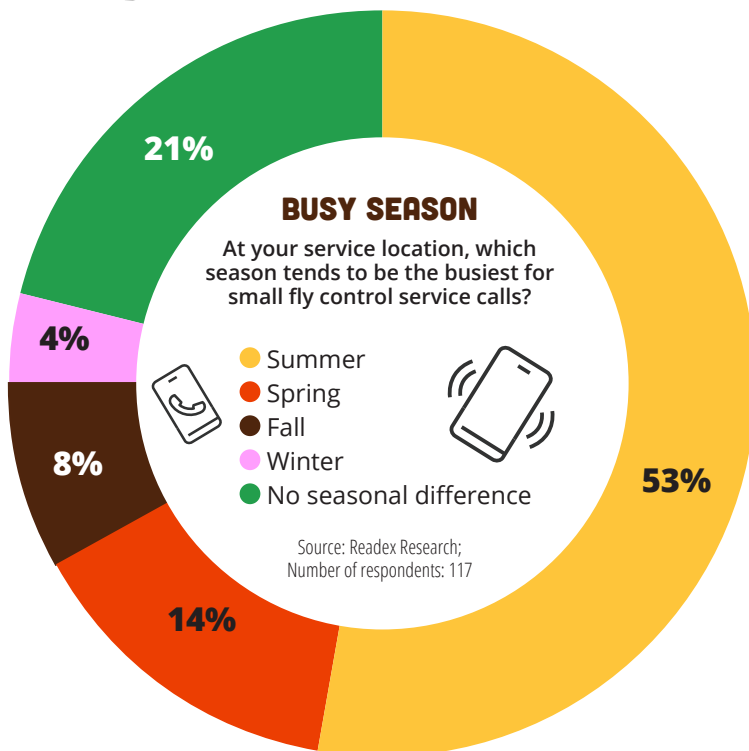


Source: Readex Research;
Number of respondents: 55
(Those who offer small fly control separately)

BUSY SEASON

At your service location, which season tends to be the busiest for small fly control service calls?

- Summer
- Spring
- Fall
- Winter
- No seasonal difference



Source: Readex Research;
Number of respondents: 117



ROOM TO GROW

Though small flies can be a big problem, the service line may not be generating the amount of revenue you'd like. PMPs reported only 4.9% of revenue was generated by small fly services, according to the 2025 PCT State of the Small Fly Control Market survey.

But do PMPs see an opportunity for growth next year? While 64% say they expect revenue to remain the same, 36% see a chance to increase revenue. And while the majority of revenue — 67% — comes from commercial clients, residential clients make up 32% of this work.

“About 30% of our business is on the commercial side, while the rest is on [the] residential side,” said Collin Chapman, vice president of operations, Forterra Pest Control, Southlake, Texas. “Whether you're dealing with a commercial or residential house, it's always considered an emergency pest. There's a lot of pests that people can deal with, and for whatever reason, flies are not that.”

UNLOCKING POTENTIAL

Blasingame Pest Management, Griffin, Ga., saw a need in the market and began offering small fly control services in 2025.

“We decided to start offering small fly services because we have clients asking for our help,” said Dylan Blasingame, vice president of operations. “We wanted to really start offering a solution for them as their pest control provider.”

Matt Henderson, Country Boy Pest Control, said he's seen an uptick in residential clients who need small fly services. He's made a connection between that growth and the number of new homes being built in the central Florida area.

“With all of these subdivisions that they're building, they're having to tie into all these sewer systems. Some of these places, they're building foundations and adding plumbing, then have everything sit for months on end,” he said. “That can be a perfect breeding ground for small flies.”

Lingering effects from the COVID-19 pandemic are still being felt throughout the industry. Henderson said he also attributes an increase of residential clients to those who started adding houseplants to their space — and didn't realize that potting soil can be a haven for small flies, especially fungus gnats. When it comes to the commercial side, Chapman said now that people are required to return to work, there's been more emphasis on the control of small flies in office buildings.

“We're starting to find that the owners of these office buildings are becoming more sensitive to keeping pests at bay,” Chapman said. “They understand that



4.9%

Average percentage of revenue generated by small fly control services in 2024 at pest control company locations.

Source: Readex Research;
Number of respondents: 117

there's a liability, so they're starting to be more proactive in adding some of these services."

HOLDING STEADY

While some PMPs are looking for ways to increase their small fly revenue, others aren't too concerned with expanding the service line. When it comes to consistency, 63% of PMPs reported the number of small fly jobs stayed the same in the past year, while 32% saw an increase.

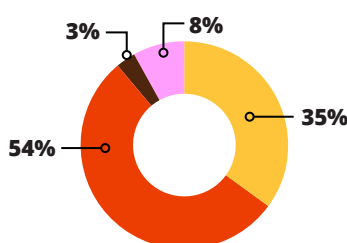
"It's not terribly important for my business," said Melisa Arnold, Horizon Pest Solutions, who mostly services commercial spaces including grain elevators, a meat market and a butcher shop. "I have a couple of accounts where fly control is super important to them, but the overall scope of what I do is not fly control."

American City Pest & Termite, Gardena, Calif., mostly provides service to commercial locations like restaurants and food handling facilities. It includes small fly control as part of its general pest control services. But Vice President Greg Bausch says small fly services would be an add-on for residential clients.

"I found small fly control to be very consistent with our business, and I don't see it growing," Bausch said. "I would see it growing with our business as we add more business, but I would say the percentage would stay the same." •

SMALL FLIES = SIGNIFICANT

In the past five years, have small fly control services become a more or less significant portion of your service location's business?



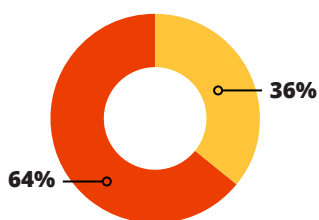
- More significant
- No change
- Less significant
- Cannot compare not involved 5 years ago



Source: Readex Research; Number of respondents: 117

SOLID REVENUE EXPECTED

How do you expect revenue generated from your service location's small fly control services to change in the next year?



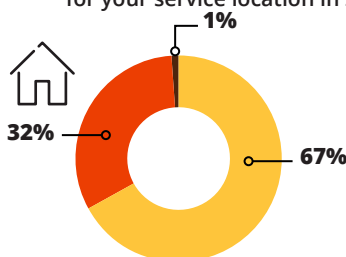
- Increase
- Remain the same



Source: Readex Research; Number of respondents: 117

COMMERCIAL TOPS THE LIST

Which market generated the highest revenue from small fly control for your service location in 2024?



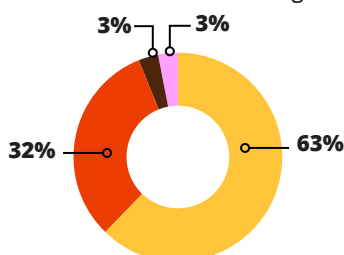
- Commercial market
- Residential market
- Institutional market

Source: Readex Research; Number of respondents: 117



JOB WERE STEADY

How did the number of small fly jobs at your service location change in the past year?



- Remained the same
- Increased
- Decreased
- Cannot compare; was not involved before 2024



Source: Readex Research; Number of respondents: 117



Treat where they hide.



Don't let small flies cost you extra time and money!

Small flies are one of the most persistent and frustrating pests in a commercial kitchen and cause problems in residential accounts, as well. Both cockroaches and small flies hide in drains, cracks and crevices, under equipment, and in other hard-to-reach areas where food debris and other organic matter tend to build up.

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Not all small flies are the same. As a PMP, you know this all too well. And that's why providing successful small fly control hinges on two important aspects: identifying the type of small fly and locating the breeding source.

While most PMPs reported fruit flies (41%) and drain flies (26%) as the species that accounted for most of their small fly service calls, PMPs also ran across phorid flies (19%) and fungus gnats (10%), according to the 2025 PCT State of the Small Fly Control Market survey. Bottom line? You have to be knowledgeable in all types of small flies.

"You have to have the correct identification before you can come up with a game plan," said Zachary Hall, Thomas Pest Services, whose company offers training videos to help with continuing education on small flies, especially some of the species PMPs don't see very often.

That game plan includes giving you clues on what areas to inspect and the kind of treatments that may be needed.

"Fruit flies and other flies like phorid flies are going to look similar, but you have to identify them first," said Greg Bausch, American City Pest & Termite. "Often they're going to breed in different places, and finding that breeding site is where you need to focus your treatment. Otherwise, you're not really controlling the problem. You can do certain space treatments and things like that, but you're just controlling adult fly populations, but not at the source."

Finding the breeding source is vital to stopping small flies. But when it comes to locating the breeding source, the list of possible spots is long. You may feel like a detective investigating everything from drains, houseplants, beverage lines, mops or buckets. It can even be a structural issue, a broken pipe underneath a cement floor or a leak behind a counter.

Matt Henderson, Country Boy Pest Control, recalls one client who had a drain fly issue at her home. Even after Henderson treated all her drains the problem persisted.



"I started asking her more questions, taking my time to think about things to ask her. One question was: 'When's the last time you changed your toilet flanges?'" he said. "She hadn't changed her toilet flanges in 25 years."

Henderson suggested she contact a plumber as he suspected her flange was leaking — making it the perfect breeding ground for drain flies. "She called me back three days later. She said her toilet flange was leaking and the plumber replaced it," said Henderson. "And they haven't had an issue since."

Even though small flies are tiny in stature, they can be a big headache for you and

your clients. This can lead to continual or repeated services if you can't determine the breeding source or if your client is uncooperative when it comes to sanitation issues. In fact, PMPs reported an average call back rate for small fly control jobs at 4.3%.

"If you don't find the breeding source, you're not going to truly control these insects," said Dylan Blasingame, Blasingame Pest Management. "They breed so quickly. The main goal is to solve the problem. I tell customers all the time that sanitation is one of the key puzzle pieces through the whole control method. If you don't cover all aspects of control, you're not going to get control." •

4.3%

Average callback
rate for small fly
control jobs

Source: Readex Research;
Number of respondents: 117

**FRUIT FLIES
TOPPED THE LIST**

At your service location, what small fly
species accounted for the largest percent-
age of small fly calls in the past year?

- Fruit flies
- Drain/moth flies
- Phorid flies
- Fungus gnats
- Other

19%

26%

41%

10%

3%

Source: Readex Research; Number of respondents: 117

PROBLEMATIC PESTS

Which small fly species are commonly problematic in your market area?



79%

Fruit flies



70%

Drain/moth flies



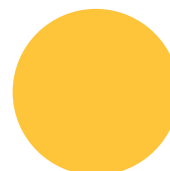
51%

Fungus gnats



44%

Phorid flies



5%

Other

Source: Readex Research; Number of respondents: 117; (respondents could select more than one answer)



LET'S TALK TREATMENT

It's all about strategy when it comes to a successful small fly treatment. You need to identify the type of fly, locate the breeding source and then determine the best form of treatment. When it comes to the type of product PMPs turn to most, drain foams/gels (87%) and IGRs (70%) top the list, found the 2025 PCT State of the Small Fly Control Market survey.

In addition to selecting a treatment, there are some other basics that can go a long way to providing stellar service. Here's some helpful advice from PMPs.

CONSISTENCY IS KEY

On average, 17.8% of commercial kitchen customers have regular small fly problems that require at least one service visit per quarter. PMPs stress the importance of staying on top of appointments — especially before summer, which PMPs report as their

busiest season for small fly control service calls. "This is especially important to start around spring. That's when I start telling the other PMPs to get their fly traps working, because that's the first line of defense," said Andy Nieves, BHB Pest Elimination. "You want to change all the fly machine bulbs in a location so that you have optimal attractiveness for them. A lot of times if you don't change that bulb, the fly machine looks fine, but it's not really. Its range is limited."

CONSIDER THE LOCATION

Whether you're dealing with a small fly problem in a home, a restaurant or a commercial space, it's vital to consider what the space is used for and what kind of treatment is safe.

"In the meat market that I take care of they have raw meat they're cutting for retail sales. Everything goes down the drain," said

Melisa Arnold, Horizon Pest Solutions. “I make sure that those drains are completely treated with a bio cleaner and an IGR that’s approved for drain use.”

For the grain elevators that she treats, she depends on parasitic wasps to control small flies.

“Their only job is to eat fly larva and eat the flies when they emerge,” said Arnold. “Doing that type of service once a month doesn’t completely eliminate the small fly problem, but it results in a 75% to 80% reduction of flies.”

DON'T OVERLOOK THE BASICS

Sure, you can use a variety of treatments for most small flies. But don’t forget the fundamentals of having (and keeping) a clean, sanitized space. In fact, physical sanitation/deep cleaning accounts for 50% of treatments used by PMPs for small fly situations.

“Usually it’s cleanliness, sanitation and cleaning that makes sure small flies don’t return,” said Greg Bausch, American City Pest & Termite.

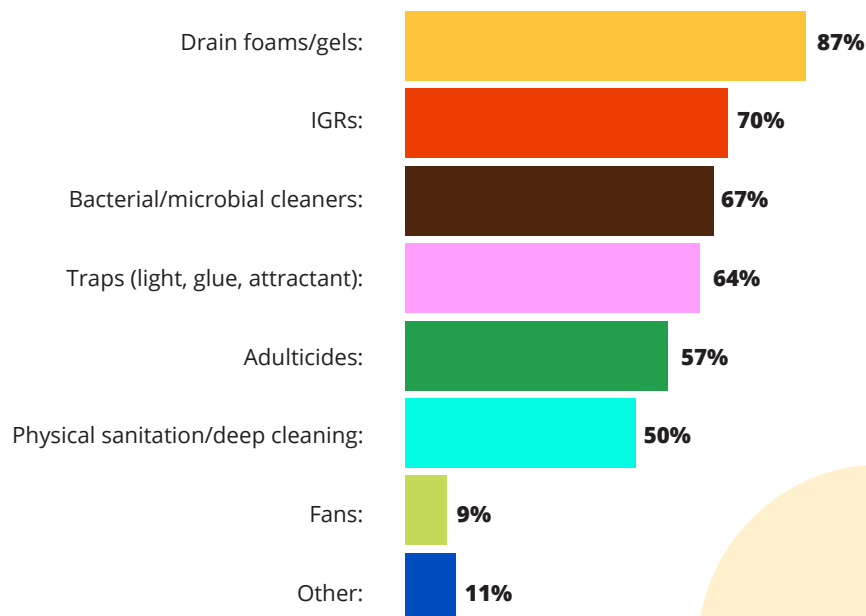
EMPOWER YOUR CLIENTS

You can’t be at every client’s house or business on the daily to point out what needs to be cleaned or sanitized. But you can empower your clients to take control between service calls.

“We recommend that our customers who have a persistent small fly problem use a foaming drain cleaner nightly before they go to bed,” said Dylan Blasingame, Blasingame Pest Management. “It needs time to sit in those drains and work before a client uses the drains again. It’s just not possible for us to go out to our customers every day.” •

Go-To Treatments

Which of these products, tools or tactics does your service location use to treat for small flies?



Source: Readex Research; Number of respondents: 117; (Respondents could select more than one answer)



ABOUT THE SURVEY

The 2025 PCT State of the Small Fly Control Market survey was sponsored by Nisus and compiled by Readex Research, a privately held research firm in Stillwater, Minn. A sample of 5,008 pest control company owners, executives, technical directors and managers was systematically selected from the PCT database. Data was collected from 123 respondents — a 2% response rate — via online survey from Feb. 20 to March 12, 2025. Respondents who did not offer small fly control services were eliminated. The margin of error for percentages based on the remaining 117 respondents is plus or minus 9% at the 95% confidence level. Charts may not add up to 100% due to rounding.



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liability premiums have stayed flat or risen only slightly. However, that can change quickly. “If you have three termite damage claims, you would likely get flagged by the insurance company and the premium would go up, or they might not renew your policy,” Caire said.

As for property insurance, Burke said rates can depend on location.

“If you own motels and apartments in Florida, yes, your property insurance has risen,” he said. “But the people we insure have nice offices with not a lot of exposure, so our property rates have been consistent.”

Banting explained that property insurers are pulling out of areas hit hard by hurricanes and tornadoes, leaving less competition behind.

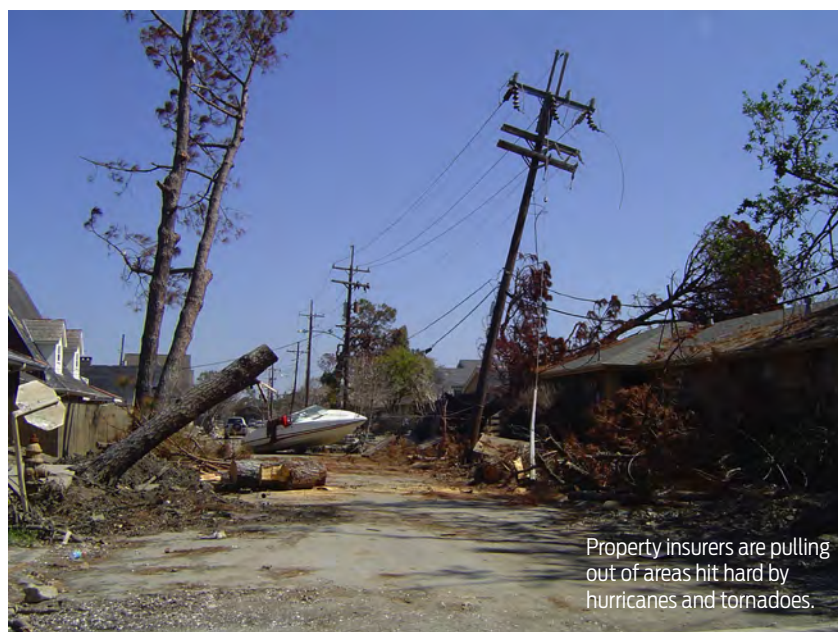
“With companies leaving, instead of flooding the market with more insurers, key players monopolize the market and increase their rates quite a bit,” according to Banting.

Peter Young, auto and property program manager at PCOpro, said many insurers left California because, for years, the state capped premiums. He added that insurers affected by fires and hurricanes will raise premiums across the country to recover their losses.

According to Caire, property insurance is a problem not due to his own rates but because home insurance premiums have climbed for his customers in New Orleans, which was slammed by Hurricane Ida in 2021. Some New Orleans property owners were even unable to obtain insurance.

“After Hurricane Ida, the bigger companies were loathed to write new policies and we ended up having some shady or fly-by-night insurance companies,” Caire said. “People were desperate and turned to those [unsavory companies], and when a bunch of claims were filed, those companies went belly up.”

In turn, some pest control customers stopped buying preventive termite treatments. Caire said that prior to 2020, DA Exterminating’s termite business was 60%



Property insurers are pulling out of areas hit hard by hurricanes and tornadoes.

curative and 40% preventive. By 2022, the ratio was 70% and 30%, respectively, and by the end of 2024, the company’s termite business was 80% curative and 20% preventive. “It’ll take the bleak property insurance landscape to improve before we see those numbers start going the other way,” he said.

Luckily for DA Exterminating, its other services are doing well enough to make up for what it’s losing in preventive termite treatments. “We have adjusted our budgets and spent more on advertising our termite treatments and explaining how important prevention is,” Caire said.

On the other hand, Native Pest Management’s preventive termite business has not declined. Banting said it’s because the company bundles services to make prevention more affordable. “In South Florida, people want to protect their homes from termites,” Banting said.

TAKE ACTION. There are many ways PMPs can reduce insurance costs. Shopping around, for example, can take time and effort, but it’s worth it.

Native Pest Management, when faced with a 100% increase in auto insurance, not only changed insurance companies, but hired a different insurance broker.

“We didn’t feel like our former broker was being competitive enough for us and he always wanted to stick with one particular carrier,” Banting said. “So, we opened it up to another broker. Some of our new insurance came with a slight increase but a lot of the insurance the new broker came back with was better coverage, lower prices and some good, aggressive deals.”

Banting said he advises pest control companies — even if they don’t switch brokers — to shop for insurance annually. However, he also said to always choose reputable, A-rated carriers that will pay when you need them.

After finding the right insurers, meet with the agents annually to review policies, according to Banting. Insurance companies even provide training on how to keep premiums low or at least make them less likely to rise.

Through these training sessions, Native Pest Management learned the importance of using GPS in their service vehicles to check the speed of their drivers and stress careful, defensive driving.

EXPERT ADVICE. PestSure’s Burke said PMPs should drill their drivers never to use cell phones when on the road unless they need GPS to find a job site. “The lead-



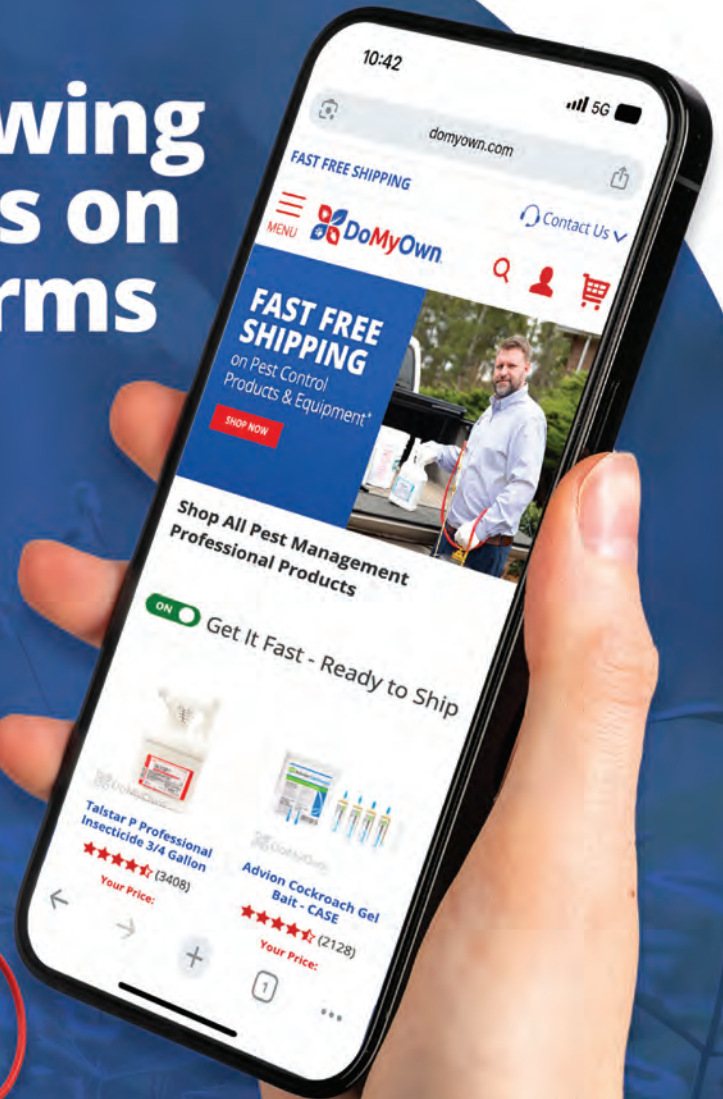
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ing cause of accidents by a lot is rear-end collisions,” Burke said. “It’s our leading loss.”

Burke cautioned pest control companies not to hire young, inexperienced drivers if at all possible. “We found that novice drivers, with five years or less of driving experience, are a problem,” he said. “These days, people are waiting to get their license, sometimes until they’re 22 years old. We found a direct correlation between novice drivers and accidents.”

PMPs also should mount cameras on their vehicles in case drivers cause a crash and blame the pest management technician in hopes of a big insurance payout, Banting said. Young added that keeping the vehicle fleet well-maintained will im-

press insurers.

When it comes to controlling general liability costs, Culotta said he recommends organizing regular safety meetings to update technicians on the latest safety measures and chemical uses.

“If they do have existing claims, maybe examine the types of claims going up and see how they can address those issues and reduce those claims,” Culotta said.

Burke noted that service technicians need to document everything when on the job to avoid fraudulent liability claims by customers.

Managing property insurance costs is more challenging because weather is uncontrollable. “Make sure you have updated building materials, a good roof, updat-

ed wiring and storm-resistant materials, especially if you’re in a hurricane zone,” Young said. “Security cameras and fences are also good.”

DON’T FORGET TO CHECK UP. PMPs can learn more about these measures and more through annual insurance check-ups with their brokers or insurance companies. “It takes time to build trust with the insurance company, that they will do what’s right and have your best interest in mind,” Banting said. “But our perception changed when we realized we didn’t have to keep the insurance company out of everything.” **PCT**

The author is a Cleveland-based writer.



TOP CAUSES OF Pest Control Industry Auto Crashes

For pest control service professionals who spend countless hours on the road, staying focused behind the wheel is of critical importance. Recent data from PestSure highlights the top causes of auto crashes in the industry, reinforcing the need for fleet safety policies and driver awareness training.

According to PestSure’s latest analysis, the most frequent type of accident occurs when a driver rear-ends another vehicle, accounting for 38% of reported incidents. Other common causes include failure to yield (18%), backing into another vehicle (14%), lane changes (4%) and running a stop sign or signal (3%). “These statistics highlight a clear need for continued driver education and proactive safety measures,” said Linda Midyett, vice president/loss control director at PestSure. “Rear-end collisions, which account for over a third of industry accidents, are largely preventable. By eliminating distractions and maintaining proper following distances, service professionals can significantly reduce their risk on the road.”

Distracted driving significantly increases the likelihood of rear-end collisions because it reduces a driver’s situational awareness, reaction time and ability to maintain safe following distances. Here’s why:

- **Cognitive distraction.** Even hands-free phone conversations can cause mental distraction, making drivers slower to recognize hazards and fail to react appropriately.
- **Delayed reaction time.** When drivers take their eyes off the road (even for a few seconds), they may not notice that traffic ahead has slowed or stopped. By the time they react, it’s often too late to avoid a crash.
- **Eyes off the road.** Looking at a phone, GPS or even adjusting the radio means drivers aren’t fully aware of their surroundings. This



makes it easier to miss brake lights, sudden stops or changing traffic conditions.

- **Following too closely.** Distracted drivers often fail to maintain a safe following distance, leaving them with less time and space to stop if the vehicle in front suddenly slows down.
- **Inconsistent speed control.** A distracted driver may unintentionally speed up or fail to slow down when necessary, increasing the risk of crashing into the vehicle ahead.

Since rear-end collisions are largely preventable with better attention and proper following distances, eliminating distractions is one of the most effective ways to reduce these crashes.

PestSure encourages pest management professionals to implement and enforce policies to reduce distracted driving, provide regular driver safety training and leverage vehicle telematics to monitor driving behavior. For more information on fleet safety best practices and risk management solutions, visit www.PestSure.com. — Source: PestSure

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VETERANS



Dave Burns (left), owner, Burns Pest Elimination, honors Air Force Technical Sergeant Brandon McClure with the PestVets challenge coin, a symbol of excellence bestowed on military employees.

WANTED



The military talent pool is a boon to pest management firms long challenged by labor shortages.

By Donna DeFranco

Integrity, commitment, initiative, leadership and respect; these qualities that come to mind when we think of members of the U.S. Armed Forces are also qualities business leaders seek in their employees.

When we're talking about pest management roles, delving into more detail reveals even greater parallels. People who have spent time in military service tend to be organized, pragmatic and detail-oriented problem-solvers who know how to get things done. They recognize the value of teamwork and get along with people of diverse cultural and racial backgrounds. They can give and take direction. They prioritize safety, work well under pressure and care about their communities.

It's no wonder that so many pest control company leaders are ramping up efforts to recruit more military veterans. Additionally, when you consider the sheer volume of military candidates — about 200,000 service members a year look to enter civilian jobs at the end of their service — you realize what a boon the military talent pool could be to an industry that has been long

challenged by the labor shortage. "Pest management companies aren't the only ones out there seeking folks with these admirable qualities and capabilities," said Elizabeth Bicer, director of workforce development at the National Pest Management Association (NPMA). "We're in a very competitive environment for skilled labor. That's why we're endeavoring to get the NPMA name out there, enlighten military veterans about potential careers in pest management and connect them with our member companies to apply for positions."

NPMA is doing this through a variety of efforts, undertaken primarily through the NPMA Military Hiring Program, which includes a partnership with the U.S. Department of Defense (DOD) SkillBridge program, and the PestVets Council, a group of NPMA members focused on recruiting and supporting active-duty service members, veterans and their families through mentorship, volunteerism, fundraising and more. The NPMA Military Hiring Program also works to educate nonmilitary business leaders on how to recruit and hire military personnel.



Retired Air Force Technical Sergeant Brandon McClure was promoted from service technician to field supervisor at Burns within six months of hire.

Jeff Keller, technical director at Burns Pest Elimination, who earned the title of 2024 David Cooksey PestVet of the Year, shared insight into some of his own efforts. “I visit the [veterans affairs office] here in Phoenix fairly often, and I work with Mike Boyle, our recruiter, on job fairs and other military candidate outreach efforts,” Keller said. “I’ve also done talks at Davis-Monthan Air Force Base and Fort Huachuca as part of their Transition Assistance Program. Most veterans don’t even think about this industry as a career choice, so it’s great to be able to talk with them and let them know about the opportunities that exist for them.”

Burns Pest Elimination is also a participant in the SkillBridge program, through which they recently hired retired Air Force Technical Sergeant Brandon McClure,

who was promoted from service technician to field supervisor within six months of hire.

“The assets [McClure] has brought to our team, from his leadership skills to his work ethic to his demeanor, are second to none,” said Austin Burns, Burns Pest Elimination operations manager. “Those assets were developed through his military training and leadership experiences. He’s the epitome of the type of person we want inside our customers’ homes. The way he treats our customers and interacts with employees, how he carries himself on a day-to-day basis, his organizational abilities, his leadership experience — it’s rare to find all these skills in a new employee.”

Luke Rambo, president and CEO of Rambo Total Pest Control in Puyallup, Wash., has long believed in hiring military

veterans. “First, they sacrificed their safety for our benefit and deserve to be recognized for that,” he said. “Second, we’ve found that veterans are organized and efficient, and they understand chain of command. The veterans we have worked with here reflect a mission-driven perspective. As long as they understand the overall objective, they will do what is necessary to get us there.”

THE SKILLBRIDGE PROGRAM. The DOD established the SkillBridge program to help service members transition from the military to civilian jobs through industry-specific training, internships and apprenticeships. In the pest management industry, DOD partners with NPMA to connect military candidates with member companies that commit to providing

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Providing structure, communicating expectations, checking in and offering support services are ways military team members feel at home.

eight to 10 weeks of full-time, on-the-job pest control service technician training and work experience while service members continue receiving their military compensation and benefits. The goal is a permanent job placement at the end of the training period.

“The SkillBridge program was designed to minimize the gap in employment between the time a service member separates from active duty and enters a civilian job,” Bicer said, explaining that through SkillBridge NPMA can connect participating companies with military candidates. “NPMA became involved in the SkillBridge program on behalf of our membership to alleviate some of the administrative burdens associated with outreach campaigns and program management.”

Rambo said that NPMA’s involvement made it easier for his company to take advantage of the program. “I had made mul-

multiple attempts to get the ball rolling with SkillBridge on my own, but the mountain of paperwork was more than I was prepared to deal with,” he said. “When I heard NPMA was getting involved, I knew I wanted to be a part of that process. I was on the Workforce Development Committee and the task force that was assembled to help put the NPMA SkillBridge program together.”

Keller, who was then chair of the PestVets Council, also worked with the Workforce Development Committee to secure NPMA’s approval as a SkillBridge partner. “Back in 2023, [Bicer] asked for help coming up with the training schedule to meet DOD requirements for the program,” he said. “Several of us on the committee sat down and wrote

the training and developed the schedule that helped NPMA get approved. Once approved as a SkillBridge vendor, NPMA began taking applications from companies. Burns Pest Elimination was one of the first to be approved. We jumped on the opportunity, seeing it as a great benefit for

us. I’m retired military, and I wish I would have had access to a program like this.”

The role Bicer plays in the recruitment process is providing each

service member who, through the SkillBridge website, expresses an interest in pest management with a list of participating companies in the location(s) they specify. “I give them the menu of companies, tell them to do their research, ask if they want to meet with any or all of them, and then make the connection with the



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potential employer(s)," she said. "On the employer side, they need to determine if the timing works — if they anticipate having an open position by the end of the internship and have the resources to carry out the training program. From there, the two parties decide if they want to proceed with the internship. If they do, I complete all the processing that needs to happen."

The goal is to help service members and companies establish mutually beneficial relationships that lead to career and business growth. "We're not just providing free labor through this program; we are committed to making connections that result in long-term employment," Bicer said. "We make sure our companies anticipate having an open position for their intern. The caveat is that there's no obligation on the employer or service member's side to offer or accept, but that's the goal. And that's what's been happening."

In addition to connecting SkillBridge-approved companies with candidates, NPMA boosts visibility through focused military outreach campaigns, provides participating companies with resources to develop a "military ready" company, and manages and maintains the partnership with DOD, including required reporting and communications.

ATTRACT AND RETAIN VET TALENT.

Whether your company recruits military talent through the SkillBridge program, internal recruitment efforts or both, it makes sense to put measures into place to ensure your business is supportive of military recruits. Providing structure, communicating expectations, regularly checking in and offering easy access to support services can all be important steps toward making military team members feel at home. "I spoke with a service member who explained that they are transitioning from an environment where they're told what to do and when — right down to when to eat and sleep — to an environment where there's little or no structure. That can be challenging, even daunting, to

a person who is accustomed to consistent guidance," Bicer said. "Employers should also be completely transparent about the jobs candidates are applying for. Loud noises, small spaces, temperature fluctuations and other conditions may be associated with stressful military experiences, so be sure to share that they may need to go into a crawlspace, for example, and let them decide whether that would be a good role for them."

Bicer recommended consulting with

members of the PestVets Council and/or military veterans inside your company about considerations to keep in mind. She said that the Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM) is a valuable resource as well.

"We encourage our members to go through the free SHRM Foundation Veterans at Work Certificate Program," she said. "It helps them think about steps they can take to make their companies more 'military ready,' whether that entails new initia-

SkillBridge Success: Brandon McClure, Field Supervisor

Born and raised in Tucson, Ariz., Brandon McClure, a then Air Force technical sergeant, was intent on finding a local job as he anticipated his August 2024 retirement from the military after 20 years of service. NPMA was there for him with the SkillBridge program.

"I learned about SkillBridge while I was taking out-processing classes through the military's Transition Assistance Program (TAP)," McClure said. "After completing a required training class through the military's education center, I was given access to a website that listed about 4,000 jobs nationwide. I narrowed the field down to the Phoenix area, where about 150 jobs were listed. I looked more deeply into the requirements and timelines of about 20 jobs and applied for 10 of them."

While none of those turned out to be an ideal fit, McClure monitored the listings for several months. When NPMA showed up as an approved SkillBridge partner, he applied. Elizabeth Bicer, director of workforce development at NPMA, called him within two days.

"[Bicer] told me there was a company in Glendale — Burns Pest Elimination — that was part of the program. She gave me [Burns recruiter/trainer] Mike Boyle's number, and [Boyle] and [technical director] Jeff Keller interviewed me over the phone. They connected me with their Tucson office, where I applied and subsequently worked my internship," McClure said.

McClure completed his required training in short order. He earned his state license within six weeks and was promoted from service technician to field supervisor within six months. Austin Burns, operations manager, said the middle-management skills McClure developed in the Air Force put him on the fast track.

"People who come from the services have a lot of the attributes we look for in great employees," Burns said. "The SkillBridge program has definitely proved that."

As for McClure, he had never given pest management a thought as a career choice prior to learning about it through his SkillBridge experience. "The opportunity fell into my lap at the right time," he said. "I'm enjoying it and can see myself doing this for a long time."



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tives or updating their current policies and procedures.”

Bicer also suggested surveying your current team to ask service members to self-identify. Those people may be open to helping with recruiting efforts, perhaps sharing insights with candidates about what the job is like and how their military experience and skills have come into play on the job. You may want to include a veteran in the interview, she said.

Keller agreed, adding, “The ideal situation is that the person conducting the interview has a military background. When you fully understand what the candidate did in the service, it’s easier to see how their knowledge and experience can translate to a position in the civilian world. You may also have a better sense of what type of support or resources that new employee may need to make their transition as smooth as possible.”

Employee satisfaction is key, according to Burns. “When you’re able to identify the true skillset of the individual, you can place them in the right position, whether that’s managing people, being a route technician, serving as an IT manager or fulfilling another role,” he said. “That’s what we try to do, put the person in a position where they’ll do the best job for us, but also where they’ll enjoy doing it. We help them understand our company culture as well, so that they can determine whether it aligns with their core values and skillset coming out of the service.”

Overall, attracting military talent comes down to the same principle as attracting any conscientious and capable candidates. “Be good people and represent a positive work environment in your job posts. Like attracts like, and if your organization is run well, and your people are accountable, you will definitely draw some quality individuals, including quality veterans,” Rambo said.

STRENGTHENING THE TEAM. Business leaders who have hired service members note the value of the exchange of



Hiring more service members requires time, commitment and intentionality.

knowledge and expertise between military and civilian employees. Collaboration and shared learning help teams and businesses grow stronger.

“Service members inherently apply a sense of urgency and organization to everything they do. I don’t need to call and say, ‘This has to be done,’ because it’s already in the works,” Keller said. “Where nonmilitary technicians tend to excel is in communicating with customers. When you have one-on-one conversations with a client, there’s a certain way you talk and act that doesn’t necessarily align with how military people are accustomed to speaking with one another. Everyone has something they can learn from their peers.”

Bicer added that military employees have an opportunity to learn about work/life balance from their civilian counterparts.

“We in the civilian sector talk about work/life balance, but there’s not a lot of that in the military,” she said. “Coming from that structured lifestyle, it can be challenging to try to balance and separate your home life from your work life. Civilian employees can show by example.”

Similarly, military employees can set the example for prioritizing and quickly

engaging with tasks to get them done. “We can all benefit from that mission-driven mindset: What are we trying to achieve, how do we attack the problem, how do we take it apart?” said Bicer.

FULFILLING THE MISSION. Hiring more service members isn’t a particularly difficult goal, but it does require time, commitment and intentionality.

Taking advantage of the SkillBridge program, tapping into the knowledge and wisdom of PestVets members and the military veteran employees within your own company, and engaging with the community all help put you on the right path.

“Don’t limit yourself to job fairs. Look for community outreach programs, veteran assistance programs and volunteer opportunities; host community food or coat drives for vets,” said Burns. “When you get involved in the veteran community, people start to recognize your brand and know that you support military hiring. If you really want to recruit vets, you have to get involved with what vets are doing, and there’s no better way than to get more involved with your community.” **PCT**

The author is a frequent contributor to PCT.

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DR. RAMSEY'S BEE LINE TO ADVANCE PEST RESEARCH



Dr. Samuel Ramsey's list of successes remains vast, including raising nearly \$100,000 for international bee research, teaching at the University of Colorado and headlining media appearances, all while keeping his sights on the advancement of cutting-edge pest research. **BY AMANDA JOERNDT**

No successful career is a walk in the park. Along the way there are bumps, bruises and a small internal voice buzzing with fears of failure. But, according to entomologist Dr. Samuel Ramsey, what matters most is not what happens to you, but how you respond. Throughout his life, Ramsey has channeled his passion for sci-

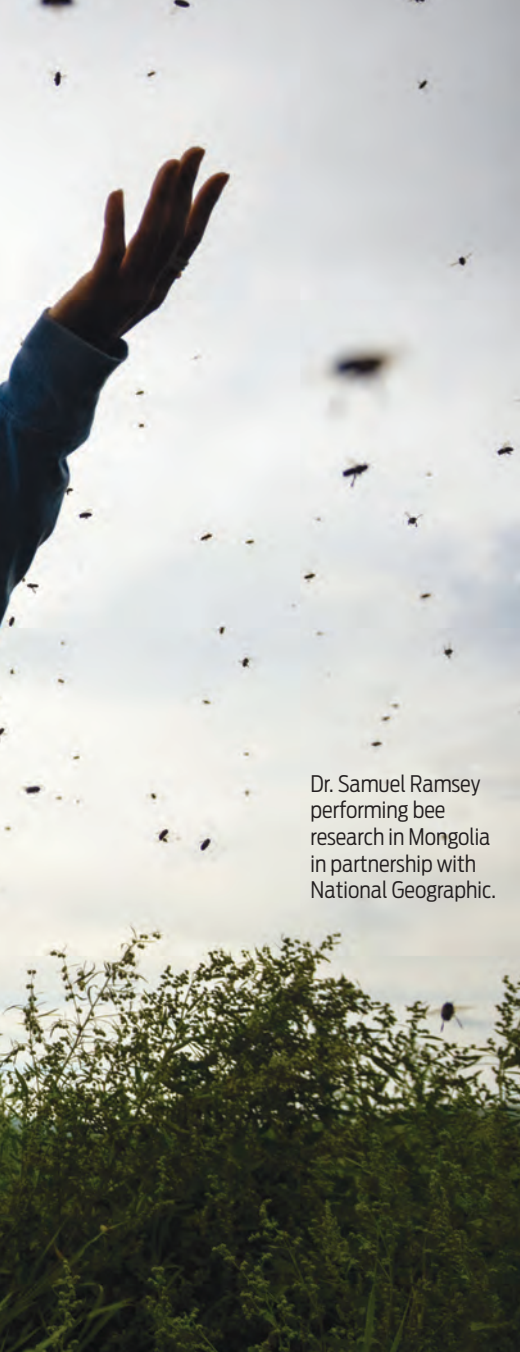
ence — cultivated early through an interest in pests and entomology — into a drive to make a meaningful impact in fields that value greater diversity and unique perspectives.

Ramsey, who is an endowed assistant professor of entomology at the University of Colorado, Boulder, sat down with PCT at PestWorld 2024 in Denver, Colo.,

to learn what he's been up to the since his PCT magazine debut in 2012, and his hopes for the next 13 years.

BUSY BEE. Before Ramsey started working in academia, he began his career at American Pest, Fulton, Md., where he helped make real-world research discoveries in entomology. Ramsey said that role has helped him successfully balance both practical, hands-on work and academic research at the same time.

The University of Colorado specifically chose Ramsey because of his interdisciplinary skill set and pest management background, he said.



Dr. Samuel Ramsey performing bee research in Mongolia in partnership with National Geographic.

“The people I worked with at American Pest were incredible mentors. They helped me understand what makes the pest control industry unique — particularly the importance of return on investment and the need for results that show immediate value,” he said.

Earning his Ph.D. in entomology from the University of Maryland, College Park, Ramsey is now known for his scientific contributions with Varroa mites (*Varroa destructor*) — which he said is one of the top three economically expensive invasive pests on the planet — and it is ultimately affecting the bee population.

But obtaining his Ph.D. had its share

of challenges, Ramsey said. “I’ve been through experiences that shook my confidence, but they also pushed me to find the strength within myself and realize that I have the potential to accomplish great things,” he said. “There were people telling me that I wasn’t the type of person who should get a Ph.D.”

Choosing to ignore critics, Ramsey was able to lead research efforts studying Varroa mites feeding on bees. He designed a project that targets the parasite at its feeding site, aiming to disrupt its ability to absorb nutrients from its host. The goal is to reduce the parasite’s population to the point of collapse. “These parasites were once thought to feed on the bees’ blood like vampires,” Ramsey said. “But what we didn’t realize is that they function more like little werewolves — tearing into bees, feeding on a really substantive tissue, making wounds that can allow infectious microorganisms to enter. They also directly vector diseases that ultimately lead to the bees’ death.”

As a professor, he can expand his thought processes to come up with creative ways to continue to conduct research, domestically and internationally, and make his discoveries publicly accessible. Through these pathways, he is able to help drive forward the public’s understanding of bee health and pest management, he said.

THE RESEARCH GAVEL. Ramsey is currently sounding the alarm on a new invasive pest making its way to the U.S. from southeast Asia, called the Tropilaelaps mite. He said that since Tropilaelaps mites aren’t yet widely researched, he decided to start working with beekeepers to make them aware of the pest.

In turn, the beekeeping community helped Ramsey continue his research by raising money for him to travel to Asia to study the organism, which, he said, felt like his own personal presidential campaign. “They started raising money for me like I was running for president,” he said. “Around \$98,000 was raised, and the funds have been able to go toward studying this parasite, providing some of

the first data available for novel forms of control for this organism — both chemical and nonchemical — and that work is continuing on today.”

The Ramsey Research Foundation was established to fund his research on pollinator health and to support the development of advanced research facilities in global regions needing social investment. While working on an international research project in Thailand, Ramsey said he was able to see firsthand how passionate the Indigenous people were about their connection with bees. Additionally, he saw how when those bees are unhealthy, they migrate into people’s homes and impair their livelihoods, causing life-threatening situations.

Ramsey’s most recent project, the Honey Bee-nome Project, takes a closer look at the genome of obscure bee species that are not sequenced to contemporary standards. “What typically happens with the bees is a parasite shows up, and it’s something we know nothing about,” he said. “We spend years figuring out all of the details about it, and [by then] it’s already been established and becomes more difficult to get rid of. The data from this project will be available for open access to any government body or individual that would like to read it.”

STAND OUT. One reason why Ramsey said he has been able to accomplish so much in a short time period is because of his curiosity to think outside of the box and stand out from the crowd in his work.

“We have been told that when an individual goes into a professional space, there is a specific way we need to dress, a certain way our hair and clothes need to look,” he said. “The problem is when you have a whole convoy of individuals speaking the same way and thinking the same way, they’re going to ask the same question and reach the same conclusion.”

Ramsey said multiple studies have shown that groups of researchers who have diverse qualities are able to outperform groups of researchers that have similar educational degrees and have attained greater levels of accomplishments. “Bring-

/// continued on page 108

Fly control in commercial environments is important because of the associated health risks that come with flies, including potential reputation damage and regulatory compliance.



FLY on the Wall

Effective fly management in commercial environments involves integrated strategies, advanced technologies and best practices.

By Adam Holt, B.C.E.

Flies are more than just a nuisance in commercial environments like restaurants, hospitals and food production facilities, they are a critical public health threat and a business liability. This article reviews the biology and behavior of nine of the most common fly species encountered in commercial settings, ex-

plores their hot spots and dives into best practices for control, communication and client partnership.

ROLL CALL. Here's a look at the biology, behavior and key identifying traits of commonly encountered flying insects.

House Fly (*Musca domestica*): Medium-sized gray flies with four dark stripes on the thorax. They breed in decaying organic matter and have a short life-cycle — as little as 7 to 10 days. They regurgitate and defecate frequently, which is how they spread pathogens.

Fruit Fly (*Drosophila melanogaster*): Tiny (2–4 mm) tan or brown flies with bright red eyes that are attracted to fermented fruit and sugary residues. They reproduce

rapidly — females can lay 500 eggs — and thrive in even the smallest film of organic residue.

Drain Fly (*Psychoda phalaenoides*): Small, fuzzy, moth-like flies. Adults often rest on walls near drains. Larvae feed on the organic sludge lining drains and septic tanks.

Phorid Fly (*Megaselia scalaris*): Small (1–3 mm) humpbacked flies that run erratically rather than fly when disturbed. They breed in decaying organic material and sewage.

Blow/Bottle Flies (*Calliphora* spp./*Lucilia sericata*): Metallic green or blue flies, larger than house flies. Attracted to carcasses, meat and garbage. Larvae (mag-



gots) are used in forensic entomology to determine time of death.

Cheese Skipper (*Piophilha casei*): Small dark flies with a peculiar “skipping” behavior of larvae. Thrive in rotting meats and cheeses.

Flesh Fly (*Sarcophaga crassipalpis*): Medium to large grayish flies with black thoracic stripes. They lay live larvae on decaying flesh, feces or open wounds.

Stable Fly (*Stomoxys calcitrans*): Resemble house flies but with piercing mouthparts. Bite animals and humans to feed on blood, causing irritation and spreading disease.

Fungus Gnat (*Bradysia/Sciara* spp.): Delicate, mosquito-like flies often found around overwatered potted plants. Larvae feed on fungi and decaying plant material.

Commercial account hot spots for flies include kitchens, food prep areas, bars,

beverage stations, restrooms, floor drains, dumpsters, loading docks, potted plants, light fixtures and ceilings. Kitchens and food prep areas are prime targets for house flies, fruit flies and phorid flies due to food waste, sugary residues and organic debris. This includes refrigerators, ice machines, cold storage and more. Insects can survive in temperatures below freezing (32° F) and as high as 122° F. Bars and beverage stations are hotbeds for fruit flies because of beer taps, soda fountains and spilled sugary liquids.

Drain and phorid flies thrive in restrooms and floor drains because of the biofilm that forms in moist, organic-rich plumbing.

Blow flies and flesh flies breed in exposed garbage and animal byproducts. City and/or county governments are responsible in most states for maintaining the dumpsters, however, they are quite commonly missed. Dumpsters can breed millions of flies, so it is an excellent place to begin any fly inspection. Hospitals and offices with indoor plants often struggle

Dos and Don'ts of Fly Control

DO:

- Inspect regularly and identify breeding sites. Inspection is No. 1 and finding the source is crucial to solving the problem.
- Install insect light traps in back-of-house areas while utilizing smart technology to reduce efforts in things such as counting flies.
- Use drain cleaning enzymes and mechanical scrubbers for biofilm.
- Seal doors and windows to prevent fly entry. Use air curtain fly fans at door and window entries where appropriate.
- Educate staff on sanitation and waste management with technical training and/or supplemental technical informational flyers.

DON'T:

- Rely solely on aerosol sprays as they only kill visible adults.
- Overlook plumbing and mop closets.
- Ignore fruit bowls, wet rags or food-soaked cardboard.
- Place fly traps near food prep zones as they may attract more flies.



with fungus gnats and lesser house flies and stable flies frequently hover around warm light sources like light fixtures close to the ceilings.

IMPORTANCE OF FLY CONTROL

Three key reasons fly control in commercial environments are important include the associated health risks that come with fly infestation, reputation damage and regulatory compliance.

Flies are mechanical vectors of pathogens such as *Salmonella*, *E. coli* and *Listeria*. House flies alone are known to carry over 100 disease-vectoring organisms. A fly sighting can lead to negative reviews, lost customers and failed health inspections, leading to reputation damage for the client and health departments and third-party auditors (e.g., SQF, HACCP, AIB) require effective pest control as part of sanitation protocols.

UPSELL. Fly problems open the door for valuable service add-ons. Drain maintenance programs using bio enzymes create a green program customers can take advantage of; however, this does require some minor training for the customer. The customer must be aware they can *not* use any other products in the drain along with the bio enzymes. If an additional product containing an active ingredient such as bleach is used it will destroy the live enzymes. Another critical tip here is prior to using the bio enzymes, the customer must clean the drain first and then use the bio enzymes second to maintain the clean environment. Other opportunities include:

- Air curtains and door seals for preventing fly entry at loading docks and doors.
- Sanitation consultations that include staff training on food and waste handling, food storage, cleaning, etc.
- Insect Light Traps (ILTs): Discreet monitoring and control systems that utilize smart technology as well. While not all digital solutions in this category are 100% accurate, the possibilities are there for you to explore.
- Fly Bait Stations: Non-intrusive, long-lasting solution.

Case Studies

Fruit Flies in a High-End Cocktail Bar

A popular downtown bar faced persistent fruit fly issues despite regular cleaning. Our inspection revealed a sticky spill under the beer cooler, an overwatered potted plant and improperly cleaned soda gun holsters.

Solution. We used a UV flashlight to identify sugary buildup, treated drains with bio-enzymatic cleaners, recommended plant relocation and installed discreet fruit fly traps. Additionally, staff received a quick sanitation training. Within two weeks, fly counts dropped by 95%.

Drain Flies in a Hospital's Kitchen

Drain flies kept appearing in the food service area of a hospital. Standard pesticide treatments were ineffective.

Solution. We scoped the drains with a borescope and found buildup in a rarely used prep sink. The sink was cleaned thoroughly and maintained with a monthly drain cleaning program. An air curtain was installed to reduce fly ingress. Problem solved.

Educating clients on these options not only increases revenue but improves long-term results and client satisfaction.

GETTING BUY-IN. Fly control is a team effort. Without staff cooperation, the best service in the world can fail.

- **Educate, don't lecture.** Use simple language to explain the biology of flies and how they reproduce. Don't forget to mention disease transmission; this seems to hit home quite often especially if someone can relate.
- **Show the hidden stuff.** Photos and videos of biofilm in drains or larvae in trash bins and dumpsters are powerful motivators.
- **Build trust.** Respect their workflow and find solutions that work with their operations.
- **Provide checklists.** Simple daily and weekly sanitation reminders make a big difference.
- **Celebrate small wins.** Recognize and reinforce improvements, like "X days fly-free" boards.

A PICTURE'S VALUE. Transparency and documentation are critical, and clients want to see results. What is even more important is providing your client with access to a digital logbook to see visuals representing the work being done.

Clients don't want manual service re-

ports any longer because that equals extra work. This is especially true when it comes to AIB, BRC and/or SQF audits. In this day and age, clients require all documentation and access to be digital for efficiency. Impactful visual tools:

- Before-and-after drain photos
- Fly trap count charts
- Screenshots from ILT captures
- Magnified images of fly larvae
- Digital reports with embedded photos

Don't just say, "We cleaned the drain." Show them a slimy, sludge-filled "before" shot next to a clean "after" shot. Visual proof drives home the value of your service and reinforces why they're investing in pest management. Controlling nuisance flies in commercial environments requires a deep understanding of fly biology, thorough inspections and strong partnerships with clients. With consistent communication, targeted interventions and a proactive mindset, pest professionals can not only eliminate fly issues but turn them into opportunities for growth and customer loyalty.

The key to control includes combining science, service and storytelling. When clients see the "why" behind what you're doing and "how" it helps them, you don't just solve problems, you build lasting trust. **PCT**

The author is a board-certified entomologist.

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One man's trash is another bug's playground. Getting clients to buy in with waste management is an important part of a PMP's job.

TALKING Trash

By Richard Berman

Poor trash or waste management directly impacts the presence of pests, including flies, and the pest management professional's (PMPs) ability to provide pest remediation and the clients' ability to prevent pests. Part of a PMP's responsibility and approach to Integrated Pest Management (IPM) is to advise the client and make suggestions and recommendations to prevent pests in the first place. Remember, we're not in the pesticide business. We're in a service business that happens to use pesticides as one of our — notably important — tools.

This article focuses on the role good and bad trash management plays in preventing and controlling pests and the recommendations we should be suggesting to customers.

Waste in customer locations can be dry, like cardboard, plastic wrap or solid empty food containers, or moist garbage like food waste. Dry waste is less susceptible to attracting and harboring pests, while dirty empty food containers are more so.

If the service technician observes empty food containers waiting for recycling or disposal that are contaminated with food

waste, the customer should be advised to rinse the containers waiting for removal.

ONE MAN'S TRASH. There are different classes of waste holders. There are simple barrels, dumpsters and compacting containers, all of which need emptying. There are certain principles that apply to all waste containers and are influenced by the nature of the customer's operation, including:

- The size of the rubbish unit employed is influenced by the volume of waste that the business produces.

- The frequency of emptying waste containers should reflect the volume produced.
- All waste containers need cleaning and maintenance.

The rubbish unit, whether a barrel, dumpster or compactor, should be large enough to be covered and prevent overflow and spillage onto the ground. If the professional sees waste units too small, the recommendation should be made to use a larger container.

If there is not enough space available to allow for a larger waste unit, more frequent pickups to empty the receptacle may be required. Additionally, locations with large waste containers doing a high business volume may simply need more frequent pickup to prevent overflow. Make these recommendations as necessary.

Waste containers with broken or poorly fitted covers need repair or replacement. Metal waste baskets used outside are more secure than plastic, as rodents are more likely to chew through plastic.

Waste baskets used inside and outside need to be washed and cleaned as frequent as necessary. Plastic liners used within inside waste baskets help keep them clean longer, but waste can accumulate beneath the plastic liner.

In turn, PMPs will need to pull the liner to look for accumulating waste (and pests) flush to the waste basket.

DUMPSTER MAINTENANCE. Dumpsters are normally lifted by specially equipped trucks and emptied. Waste haulers should be required to clean dirty dumpsters each time they are emptied. Units that only hold dry waste may not need frequent cleaning. Dumpsters used for general garbage need frequent cleaning.

This cleaning requirement is usually specified in the customer's waste disposal contract, but the cleaning is not always done. If the service person happens to be present, pausing to watch if cleaning is being done is helpful and offers the opportunity to provide feedback to the customer.

Some contractors may choose to remove the full unit and use an empty, clean one as a replacement. Some may see this option as preferable to on-site cleaning.

Dumpsters and compactors that are leaking waste onto the ground need to be repaired or replaced. Dumpsters and compactors should be placed on solid, cleanable concrete pads or similar hard surfaces, pitched and associated with a drain to catch water. PMPs should advise customers if a disposal system is located on soil or crushed stone as such surfaces are attractive to pests. While both surfaces may ultimately percolate liquids, neither surface is cleanable.

The ideal location for dumpsters and compactors is away from loading docks and personnel doors.

While this may not always be practical, units located near building exteriors should not be located near ventilation air intake openings. Some properties have rubbish areas located in enclosed spaces, especially in dense urban areas where outdoor space is limited.

In such cases, rollout and personnel

doors to the outside should routinely be kept closed with debris and clutter inside eliminated. Some customers may hold food waste in refrigerated or cool spaces waiting for disposal. This is an excellent, albeit not inexpensive, practice almost certain to prevent pest fly issues.

GARBAGE GADGETS. In recent years the trash can has been crossed with the compaction concept and a company called Bigbelly has produced self-contained, solar powered compactor trash units that electronically send messages when they need to be emptied.

The bottom line with pest management-related trash business is that PMPs need to be aware of customers' waste disposal practices and how they may impact the presence of pests. PMPs need to be prepared to offer advice and suggestions when dealing with trash and disposal's role in pest management. **PCT**

The author is a consultant at RCBerman, LLC, and serves on the Urban Pest Management Technical Committee.



Waste holders come in various shapes and sizes and are made from a range of materials.

INSIDE Scoop

When large flies make it inside, innovative treatment methods are sometimes required to begin the road to control.

What happens when typically outside large flies cross the threshold? One expert thinks outside-the-box for indoor solutions.

By Chelle Hartzer, B.C.E.

We typically talk about small flies being an inside issue and large flies as an outside issue. Their food sources and breeding habitats are typically outside. As adult fly populations build up, more and more can fly inside a structure.

While that is generally true, there are times when large flies breed indoors. Let's take a look at some typically uncommon places large flies can cause problems indoors and how to deal with them.

IT'S AN OUTSIDE PROBLEM...UNTIL IT ISN'T. Large flies like decomposing material; anything from trash, to feces, to carcasses.

One unusual situation that can attract flies indoors is when an animal gets into a wall void — attics, cellars or other hard-to-reach areas — and dies. The sweet smell of decomposition attracts flies, who then lay eggs and expand their population.

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Adult large flies can enter indoor areas through floor cracks, holes in walls, unsealed windows and vents.

Customers may notice the smell of decomposition if it's close to living areas, or it may just be the flies that serve as evidence of a problem. This includes adult flies that come through cracks in the floor, holes in the walls, vents and other openings. In large office buildings or other commercial spaces, it's not unusual to have an animal either crawl into or get stuck inside HVAC vents. Finding those carrion sources isn't always easy and, even if they are found, removal can be tricky or impossible.

Another location where large flies can be found breeding indoors is in trash and recycling bins. Indoor household bins can be gross when there's a build up of moist organic substances. The longer bins stay that way, the more likely flies are to find and exploit it.

Larger trash bins in commercial facilities and larger curb-sized bins are even more susceptible to large fly infestations since they get cleaned less often. As more bags get thrown in, some break, some leak and others sit for much longer before being emptied. Being inside, even in garages, keeps them temperature-controlled and

protected from the elements. Additionally, homeowners may have compost bins inside for kitchen scraps. Letting compost sit for a week or more invites hungry flies to a rich food source.

One more example of large flies breeding indoors is when there are many animals occupying the space. This is rare in residential settings, but much more common in zoos, meat processing, poultry housing, milking plants and other similar locations.

In most of these accounts, a mixture of large flies like house flies, bottle flies and blow flies will be present because there is decomposing feed for live animals, lots of feces, spilled "food" in places like milking barns — and in the case of food processing facilities — the product itself becomes a food source for flies and maggots. When there are live animals present, the situation gets complicated.

IT'S A SANITATION ISSUE, RIGHT?

It's no secret that eliminating a fly issue depends on sanitation. If flies have no food source, they must go elsewhere for

maggots to develop. Get the underlying conditions removed and you permanently remove the flies — easy, right? If only that was true.

In some cases, pinpointing the indoor food source they are breeding in is not an easy task and it gets more difficult when there are multiple sources and locations.

One of the most common sanitation situations that cause indoor fly problems is when the sanitation issue comes from a neighboring property. Proximity to the neighbor means flies get inside and find a suitable habitat.

The source could be a nearby feed lot, a recycling plant or a neighbor with a couple dogs who never clean their backyard. This, of course, causes an increase in flies that end up coming indoors. Then, if there is an indoor food source, flies will readily take advantage, compounding the problem. If this "next door" sanitation issue can't be managed by the customer, it's going to remain a problem.

Sometimes the underlying sanitation issue is something wanted. Greenhouses use fertilizer with all the nutrients nec-

ANNUAL FLY CONTROL ISSUE ///

essary to raise healthy maggots. Processing facilities may have a range of ingredients, from meat to milk, that attract large flies. Aquaculture and water processing sites provide lots of decaying organic material. While still a bit rare, more facilities are raising insects, like crickets for food and soldier fly larvae for composting. Beneficial insects for release, and insectariums have all the conditions needed for flies to breed inside.

It's not realistic to expect a poultry farm to eliminate all the poultry or a dairy to get rid of all the milk. In turn, these sanitation "problems" are always going to exist.

IT'S AN EXCLUSION ISSUE...UNTIL IT ISN'T. If flies are breeding inside, all the exclusion in the world won't affect their population. Sure, the door from the garage to the house can be sealed, openings in the wall can be fixed and breaks in the foundation can be repaired, but if the flies are in the trash bin in the kitchen, none of that will help.

Extreme cases of hoarding or people with many animals can seal up the structure, but the flies are already established inside. They can start to spread to other areas in the structure or to neighboring sites. Multi-family housing units can have flies flitting back and forth between apartments. While doors may be sealed, wall voids, vents and other openings will let them spread out.

Some structures are old and have repairs that need to be made. Those repairs aren't likely to happen overnight, so flies from outside constantly replenish populations inside.

FAKE IT UNTIL YOU MAKE IT. The question is: What can be done? Despite the fact that there are still sanitation issues, exclusion problems and inside breeding sites, it's not a completely hopeless situation. The problem won't be completely solved, but it can be significantly reduced and kept under control long-term.

It's no secret that eliminating a fly issue depends on sanitation. If flies have no food source, they must go elsewhere for maggots to develop.

Figuring out where the breeding grounds are is the first step, but it's not always easy if you have a large site or a small site with big problems. Finding as many breeding sites as possible allows for a list or map of where the most effort should be put in. For example, having information about a zoo with many different animals can show that the reptile habitat has few issues, while the elephant barn has flies so thick you need a mask to breathe. It then makes more sense to target the elephant areas first.

When hot spots are found, extra control can be directed. The control methods may be extra treatments, but it may also include extra sanitation or exclusion.

As much of the breeding material as possible should be re-

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moved; that's not surprising. However, sanitation isn't just cleaning; it can be limiting those food sources too.

The recycling plant next door can't do much sanitation, but every other sanitation issue on the current customer's site can be. Flies will still cross the property line, but with limited resources like food and habitat, they will have to go elsewhere.

Sanitation practices may be that trash and recycling get picked up more often — limiting the time breeding sources are available and decreasing or drying out moisture-riddled areas resulting in flies that have their development slowed.

Exclusion is typically thought of as sealing off the inside from the outside. For indoor large fly infestations, think smaller. Instead of focusing on the whole building, make certain the door seal that connects to the dumpster room is sufficient and seal off an infested kitchen from the rest of the hotel so fewer flies enter guest areas. Even smaller than that, a tight-fitting lid on a countertop compost bucket or small trash bin can contain flies to a much smaller area that is easier to treat.

Using insect light traps (ILTs) as monitors provides an ongoing story of where problems are and how severe they may be. Normally, we want ILTs near doors and other openings to intercept flying insects coming from outside.

With inside infestations, there may be some creativity needed when placing ILTs. That dead animal smell wafting from the vents, and the flies with it, could have ILTs in certain offices, or in drop ceilings. For areas where the sanitation "issue" is a product that's wanted, more ILTs in additional locations might be needed. It is important to watch these traps for changes. Breeding sites may shift, exclusion seals can break down and populations can increase. Responding to these changes quickly means fewer flies.

While monitoring, treatments can begin. Some products can be used on areas of organic buildup, making them toxic to the flies. When treating areas of buildup, insect growth regulators will delay and halt maggot development. Certain fly baits



Communication is key to reminding customers of the role they play in pest management.

can be strategically used inside a structure. Watch where flies frequently rest as this can provide information on where to target residual products. As always, read and follow all product labels and prevent contact with food and food contact surfaces.

All these strategies will not accomplish complete eradication, but they will stem the onrushing tide of flies that could be carrying pathogens harmful to humans.

IT'S THEIR ISSUE...UNTIL IT ISN'T!

Clients call for a reason. Maybe they tried some DIY method and failed; maybe they went straight to the professional. Either way, they expect their fly problem fixed, fixed permanently and fixed by yesterday.

Make sure customers understand what the problems are and what the results are going to be. In many large fly infestations occurring indoors, the issue will likely result in recurring services to keep populations lower.

Promising customers that you can elim-

inate their fly problem will only lead to multiple callbacks and unhappy customers. Communication is key to reminding them of the role they play in pest management. When they understand the limitations and how their help will enhance the results, they are better prepared for their tasks and for what they need to observe.

While the perfect solution is to find the underlying conducive conditions and address them for pest elimination, such a perfect account doesn't always exist.

Flies are disgusting little denizens, potentially spreading a lot of pathogens, including food-borne pathogens. They are a danger to food and health, especially when they are inside.

As with any pests, it's all about IPM. Use all the tools of sanitation, exclusion, trapping, monitoring and treatment to quickly deal with pesky fly problems. **PCT**

The author is a board certified entomologist at 360 Pest and Food Safety Consulting.

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A Select Exterminating service vehicle in front of a residential customer's home.

In *Select* Company

Lloyd Garten purchased Select Exterminating, Franklin Square, N.Y., in 1990 with no prior pest control experience and a few technicians on staff. Today, the company boasts a team of 225 and generates \$35 million in annual revenue.

BY JACQUELINE MITCHELL

In 1990, with entrepreneurial instincts yet no prior pest control experience, Lloyd Garten purchased Select Exterminating, Franklin Square, N.Y.

Beyond having a general interest in the field, the former Wall Street computer programmer knew pest control was a industry essential to protecting public health, which appealed to his drive to help others. “He enjoys solving problems and doing the right thing for the local community, and that’s why he got into the industry,” said his son, Matthew Garten, who exclusively talked to PCT about the business and its beginnings.

At the time, the small business, which was founded on Long Island in 1959, employed “a few technicians,” said Garten.

Thirty-five years later, that number has rocketed to well over 200 employees based in four offices (Franklin Square, N.Y.; Buffalo, N.Y.; plus Boston, Mass., and Providence, R.I.) that provide residential and commercial pest control services throughout the Northeast. Company revenue topped \$35 million in 2024, landing Select Exterminating at No. 34 on this year’s PCT Top 100. Lloyd is now on Select Exterminating’s board and advises the leadership team comprised of top tier industry veterans, including Matthew, who assumed the position of CEO in 2020.

Despite the company’s enormous growth since the ’90s, Select Exterminating has largely kept its success under wraps, submitting its revenue figures to

PCT for the Top 100 for the first time this year. “We always flew under the radar,” said Garten.

Despite its humble proclivities, claiming a spot on this year’s list is a way for the company to celebrate the team that works day in and day out to exemplify Select Exterminating’s core values: honesty and integrity, being reliable and hardworking and being caring professionals.

“Our clients should know that they’re working with a top-level company that has resources, great training programs and the ability to provide quality service,” said Garten. “It’s also great for team members to know they’re part of something special that’s growing and making an impact in the industry — what they’re creating here daily is truly special; they’re all part of it.”

Garten possesses intimate knowledge of the various roles that keep the company operating at a high level, having held many of them over the years.

“I’ve been involved in the company since the day that I was born,” said Garten, “Whether it was packaging Sentricon folders for my dad in the ’90s, going on wildlife jobs with him, running a route in high school and college servicing apartment buildings in the city or being in outside sales.”

Post-college, Garten worked as a property manager before returning to the family business, where his sister, Jessica Garten, also works as business development manager.

“I always wanted to be part of the family business,” said Garten. “I always loved the industry. I love the people. I like building something with great team members — building out a great leader-

ship team of people that are like-minded individuals and want to do the right thing for the client. They want to protect public health. They see a real need for it. They care. We think about children who are going to school — we want to make sure that they’re in a pest-free environment.”

He added, “We think about patients in healthcare facilities, we want to make sure they are operated on in a pest-free environment. We really care about the employees, we really care about the clients and we want to do the right thing by all of them.”

Another member of the family is represented in the form of the company’s mascot, Henry, an illustrated bug named after Garten’s late grandfather. “Henry basically stands for everything that the company stands for,” said Garten.

“He was a humble, kind, honest individual,” he said. “He cared about people; he had integrity. He worked until he was 91 years of age and took the subway to work every day to Manhattan from Queens. He embodied every single one of our core values.”

Looking ahead, Garten foresees continued growth as Select Exterminating expands organically and by acquisition throughout the Northeast where they have partnered with multiple companies each year in the region. “We’re always looking to partner with great companies,” he said. “We’ve acquired and partnered with some of the top generational family-operated companies in the New York tri-state area, Western New York, as well as the New England market. We plan to continue our expansion throughout the Northeast for many years to come.” **PCT**

The author is senior editor of PCT.



Lloyd Garten



Matthew Garten



Jessica Garten



INZECTO's HydroTrail features the compound 2-PE, which creates a highway that helps termites find bait stations.

By Kristen Hampshire

Jacob Cohn rewinds to his time in the Louisiana State University entomology lab 16 years ago when he watched a surprising termite demonstration that captured his curiosity. After drawing a straight line on a clean sheet of paper using a ballpoint pen, termites were introduced to the “landscape.” They abandoned typical zig-zag foraging and trailed along the line like marching cadets.

“The technology and science were there, but no one had adapted it to make it an additional tool for termite control,” said Cohn, CEO of Baton Rouge, La.-based Arrow Termite and Pest Control, a third-generation, family-owned business.

Why ink? What ingredient in a mundane writing utensil is so attractive to termites?

Entomologists and industry partners have been exploring this connection for years in labs, on paper.

Now, researchers say efficacy evidence has been proven in the field on both Formosan and native subterranean termites. Initial studies were conducted by master's student Luke Prescott, working with Dr. Phil Koehler, professor emeritus, University of Florida (UF). Those initial studies were modified and patented to make them practical and more effective for pest management professionals by pest insurance and risk management professional Allen Fugler, through his association with Gregg

Henderson, emeritus urban entomologist professor at the Louisiana State University AgCenter, and Enrico Levi, owner of Florida Insect Control Group.

The termite-tempting compound: 2-phenoxyethanol (2-PE), commonly found in pens for retaining the glide (moisture) and cosmetics, where it acts as a food-grade preservative to prevent bacterial growth. 2-PE is a moisture-absorbing glycol that mimics termites' primary trail pheromone, dodecatrienol, which basically signals to foragers, “Follow me!”

The compound creates a highway, and

short-cut, to termite bait stations, improving detection speed and treatment success while preventing termites from bypassing stations, a known practice, according to Koehler, who also serves as director of science, INZECTO. He said 93% of pest management professionals (PMPs) believed termites could tunnel between bait stations to reach structures.

The pied piper nature of 2-PE's luring signals to termites is captured and headed to commercialization (no EPA approval required) with INZECTO's HydroTrail, which launched at PestWorld 2024. Field



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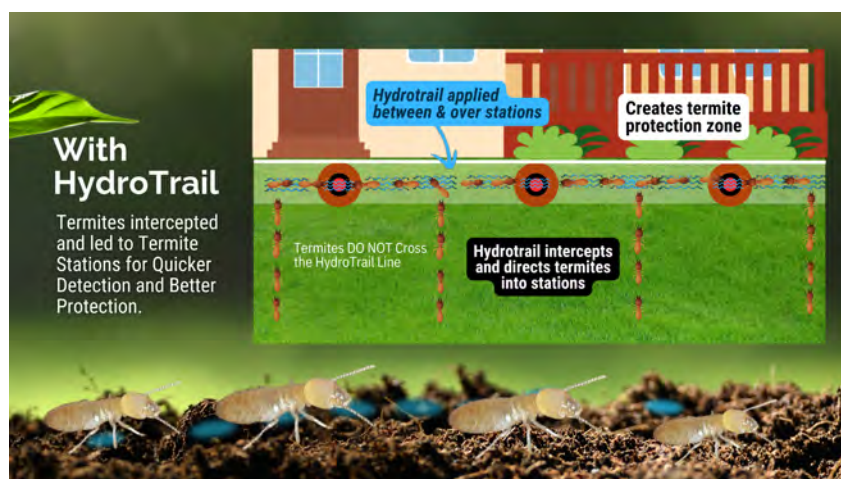


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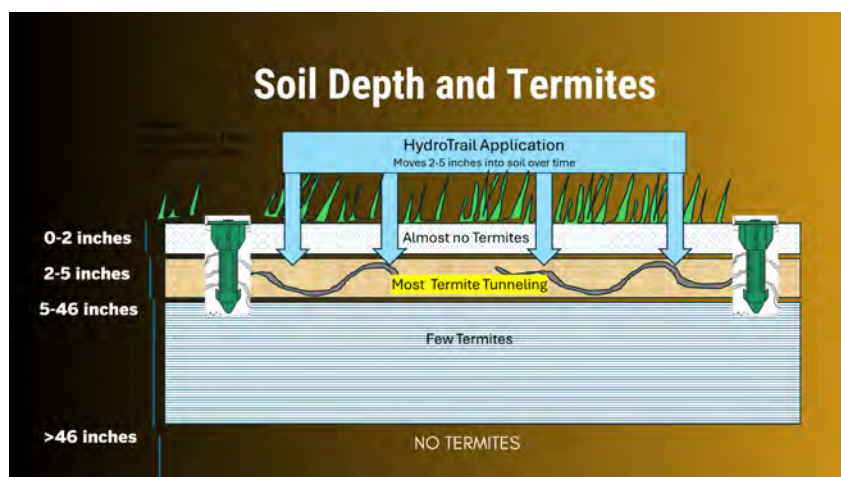


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Hydrotrail creates a protected zone around structures.



Over time, HydroTrail moves 2-3 inches into the soil, which is where most termite tunneling occurs.

trials conducted by select PMPs on HydroTrail's Innovators Council are showing the product's traction in guiding termites to bait stations and treated areas.

Cohn recorded more bait station activity on a site where HydroTrail was applied in connection with half of the property's baits. "We had two or three hits per station with HydroTrail and zero hits on the others," he said.

THE INK TRICK. Why not draw termites to bait stations rather than gamble with chasing them before they damage a structure? Koehler asked himself this question several years ago when looking at condos for his son. Viewing the transaction through an urban entomology lens, he brought a skilled friend to the inspection,

a termite-detecting dog, that whiffed out a trail.

While the condo had been treated for five years with bait stations and the pest control company produced clean reports, there had been an unrecognized termite presence in the unit. Koehler asked the company, "What do you do in a case like this?" They told him, "Move the bait until you find termites."

"I thought, that is probably not a good way to go. It's probably much better to move the termites to the station, so that is where I started thinking about how we could do this," Koehler said.

Koehler knew about the "ink trick," as did other entomology researchers and industrialists interested in termites. Eventually, in-depth studies and product devel-

opment were conducted in conjunction with Florida Insect Control Group and UF culminated into 2-PE field trials. The first were conducted over several months in 2022 in Ocala, Fla., at a site with Formosan subterranean termites with 20 in-ground bait stations along a tree line.

The trial involved alternating HydroTrail treatments and water, the placebo. Four-foot-long lines of HydroTrail were applied leading up to the stations. After the soil applications, which can be made with a backpack sprayer, the site was checked monthly.

Throughout the study, there were no hits on the water-treated stations, and five of the 10 2-PE treated stations were active with termites.

"The termites did the same thing outdoors as they did on paper trails in the lab," Koehler said. "It was amazing to see they will follow a line of HydroTrail-treated soil to a food source. I had never seen anything quite like that before."

Before deciding on 2-PE, Koehler and team investigated a suite of six glycol compounds. "Even though the termites marginally responded to the other glycols, the 2-PE elicited the greatest response by far," he said, noting that about 90 percent of termites would choose 2-PE over water (the control).

2-PE is a one-two punch compound for termite attraction because it mimics their dominant pheromone and its chemistry accumulates moisture. "You end up with high-moisture zones, which termites prefer, so there are two modes of action that bring termites to the place you want them to go," Koehler said.

A 'NO BRAINER.' Following initial field studies, the group formed an Innovators Council of PMPs to test HydroTrail, with active ingredient 2-PE. When Cohn was invited, "it was a no-brainer," he said.

Arrow Pest is located in the termite belt of southern and southwestern states, and Cohn's Baton Rouge business sees numerous Formosan termite cases.

"They have become the dominant species here because their colonies are bigger, they eat more and more quickly, and they're more aggressive," said Cohn, who says Formosan termites are "what people here on the Gulf Coast know."

One of Cohn's tests with HydroTrail

involved placing a bait station 2 feet away from a termite tube (tunnel). He applied a 1- to 2-inch-thick line of the treatment connecting the station to the subterranean tube location, hoping to draw them into the station.

Termites immediately picked up on the 2-PE attractant and within a few days were feeding in the station, Cohn said.

Scott Kight conducted field trials for Fort Myers (Fla.) Pest Control, where he is a certified entomologist and general manager. He had installed bait stations a few months prior at a condo complex with 10 buildings and a pool house.

"This gave us an opportunity to test untreated and treated areas on one site, and we took a leapfrog approach," he said of alternating from treated and untreated stations. The three-month trial with checks every 30 days resulted in 11 new hits, six of which were in treated buildings where "the actual feeding in stations was heavier."

One bottle of HydroTrail can treat two to three average-sized houses.

"It reinforced something I've known for years," Kight said. "The termites are here. I just have to get them to the station."

Because Kight had baits in place prior to the trial and already had achieved control in one building, he said the results might be swayed. However, with control in just one building out of 10 before HydroTrail, he maintains the tool is a low-cost, easily applied booster that can produce more focused protection.

SELLING 'HITS.' Since completing his trial, Kight began including HydroTrail in all existing correction programs where



there is termite activity in a structure. In March, the company rolled it out to new termite bait station installation customers.

Both Kight and Cohn see opportunities to monitor and then sell termite protection services to new and existing clients. Kight said with so many Gulf Coast vacation homes, part-time residents often do not realize the level of termite pressure and potential damage.

Levi, of Florida Insect Control Group, said vacation homes are often bought and sold quickly in his state. Termite inspections may show up clean — like what Koehler experienced when condo hunting with his son. But those home-only assessments neglect the landscape. "This is an option for new buyers to verify that they are not under siege of termites," he said.

"Selling termite prevention is harder for those with less exposure to termites," Kight said. "If we can show them the termites are there, they will be motivated to treat their properties preventively."

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Cohn is crafting a termite monitoring program that will validate a need for preventive service, targeting clients who may be price-sensitive or require more education. He sees HydroTrail and a station with cellulose (non-treated) bait as a tool for identifying whether termites are a problem without a lot of expense.

"It's a solution for people who want to do something but may not believe there are termites or have the money to spend, but if you prove they are there then you can upsell the full baiting system or treatment," Cohn said.

Fugler added, "If you check a bait station with no hits on it because termites averted it, the account is a tough renewal sale."

The termite guiding technology has potential to boost customer satisfaction, termite control efficacy and account retention, Levi said. "It elevates the level of control and protection that existing methods already provide," he said.

“It’s a solution for people who want to do something but may not believe there are termites or have the money to spend, but if you prove they are there then you can upsell the full baiting system or treatment.” — Jacob Cohn

Koehler agrees, noting success of the “sensory moat” HydroTrail establishes that reroutes termites toward bait stations and treatment zones before they have an opportunity to infest a structure. Aside from the dual-action of 2-PE as a termite and moisture attractant, the active ingredient changes termite behavior from fractal, erratic movement to linear trailing toward traditional termiticide and bait station treatments.

Levi added, “Our studies have established that termites find stations faster and more easily. They will not cross the sensory path, so the moment they find the trail, they divert to it and go to the

stations. It’s better protection for the structure.”

For eco-conscious consumers, the food-grade active ingredient is a lower concentration than what is found in over-the-counter eyedrops. “It’s found even in cosmetics, so people are putting it on their skin right now all around the world,” Koehler said.

LITIGATION AND CLAIMS. Termite pressure and the latest treatments to combat these wood-destroying pests have never been better, said Fugler. Lawsuits from emerging specialist attorneys at boutique firms chasing claims also have

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never been greater. "That drives up insurance rates," he said.

Cohn said his broker encourages taking every termite mitigation step possible in the hot zone of southern Louisiana. "They want us to use anything at our disposal to help keep our claims down and offer clients more solutions to controlling termites," he said.

Termites are the largest dollar volume pest control claim at Select Insurance Services of Westchester, N.Y., said Frank MacDonald, president. "From my perspective, anything that can cut down on termite claims in terms of damage is beneficial to customers and the carriers I represent."

Claims decreased dramatically when nonrepellent termiticides were introduced in Louisiana, said Andy McGinty, CEO, LIPCA Insurance, Baton Rouge. "Anything that could exacerbate the attention of termites to get to the bait station" is a benefit, he said.

From a risk mitigation angle, taking more steps to reduce risk of claims is positive. McGinty, a claims specialist, said he walks into these scenarios with a critical eye. "I'm optimistic that this could be a positive for the industry."

McGinty said general liability guidelines include a proven-technology discount for certain products and HydroTrail would be a definite contender.

Other proven technologies can be cost prohibitive for PMPs, such as thermography cameras for detecting wood-destroying insects that cost thousands, McGinty pointed out. HydroTrail is an easy-entry, simple application add-on to enhance already in-place termite prevention and treatment, he said.

PMPs can use equipment they already have such as mounted tank rigs and backpack sprayers.

Levi said HydroTrail is under consideration by all major manufacturers in the industry and is tied to a nondisclosure agreement. "I think there is a demand to improve the level of protection that the current systems provide," he said of the complementary solution — another tool in the existing termite prevention and protection repertoire.

WHAT'S NEXT? How long until HydroTrail is available in the marketplace as a plug-and-play termite add-on?

Levi cited a three-year period based on his company's experience introducing mosquito baiting systems. Currently, ongoing research is centered on refining the application process to make it faster and more efficient for pest management professionals. The goal is to establish HydroTrail as a gold standard to enhance termite control.

Now is year one, when early adopters are introducing the solution to customers.

"Their technical departments need to prove it works," Levi said.

Year two usually involves integrating the solution into service protocols and marketing the opportunity.

The third year is generally focused on training PMPs. Levi noted the company trains crews via webinars for those who want support.

Kight said he is optimistic. "The results are proving that we can try it on a bigger scale." **PCT**

The author is a frequent PCT contributor.

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Back to BED BUG BASICS



Five must-know tips for
new-to-the-industry PMPs.

By Jennifer R. Gordon

Just the name “bed bug” makes people shiver in their seats and with plenty of good reason. These bugs like to live up close and personal with us — drinking our blood, harboring in locations where we spend most of our time and causing deep emotional impact. Given this reality, the services provided by pest management professionals (PMPs) to eliminate these bugs create tremendous relief to their clients and promote overall positive health and well-being.

This special pest requires special work, however. Managing and eradicating bed bugs can be particularly challenging, involve coordinated efforts between different teams and require several follow-up visits. Even so, PMPs have found that gathering data and using all tools that are available and reasonable

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are the best way to tackle this bug. As such, a network of professionals spanning across industries works to provide effective control tools and processes to ensure effective, sustained results.

Nevertheless, new technicians may feel overwhelmed by the specialized nature of bed bug work and their own response to this pest. Different questions may run through a person's mind such as: Are there different species of bed bugs? Where do I begin looking for them in an account? What is the best control tool? How will I address someone's concerns? To answer these questions and more, review the following bed bug topics to help anyone new to the field provide exceptional service starting on day one.

KNOW YOUR ENEMY. Bed bugs have three distinct life stages: egg, nymph and adult. The eggs hatch into first in-

star nymphs and the nymphs must pass through five instars before finally molting into adults. All nymphal — male and female — bed bugs must take a blood meal to survive, molt, produce sperm and/or create eggs.

Like all true bugs, bed bugs have piercing-sucking mouthparts and this pest uses them to drink blood. Unlike other true bugs, adults are wingless. Moreover, an unfed bed bug is only as thick as a few sheets of paper, allowing them to hide in tight cracks and crevices.

Finally, there are two species of bed bugs a PMP may likely run into in the U.S.: the bed bug — *Cimex lectularius*, and the tropical bed bug — *C. hemipterus*.

Other bed bug species, such as bat bugs or swallow bugs, may make their way into a person's home if secluded from their preferred hosts. As such, a positive identification is always best practice.

THOROUGH INSPECTIONS. Effective bed bug control requires finding and treating bed bug aggregation sites, and this pest could win a hide-and-seek tournament.

To zone in on where you might expect to find bed bugs in an account, figure out where people spend most of their time because bed bugs like to spend their time where people spend their time. For many of us, that is the bed. However, depending on the person, they may spend most of their time in computer chairs, couches, recliners or even toilets, for example. As such, PMPs may find abnormally high numbers of bugs in seemingly atypical locations.

Once you know where to start, methodically and systematically begin looking for signs of bed bugs such as eggs, excrement, skins or bugs. Carefully pull back linens, move furniture away from the walls and lift heavy objects to look underneath. A



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A bed bug ready to puncture a person's skin.

second person can help a lot, especially with lifting and manipulating large or awkward objects. Additionally, a good pest detective will always have a high-intensity flashlight — bonus if it has blacklight capabilities for spotting fluorescing bed bug remnants, forceps (or similar) and baggies or vials for storage. Magnifying devices, knee pads and probes to investigate cracks and crevices also may help.

As a reminder, there is a difference between an infestation and an introduction. An infestation is a breeding, growing population. An introduction is one or more bed bug hitchhikers that made their way to a new location but have not yet started reproducing. The way you think about treating and the amount of time spent at the account may vary greatly between these scenarios.

TOOLS OF THE TRADE. A science-based approach to bed bug control, such as Integrated Pest Management (IPM) or Assessment-Based Pest Management (APM), may manage these bugs better than a “one-size-fits-all” approach. As previously mentioned, a good control program will perform a thorough inspection at each account.

Finding bed bugs serves at least two purposes: 1) it allows for a positive identification of the pest, which informs treatment decisions and 2) it gives PMPs an opportunity to remove large numbers of bugs immediately.

A vacuum hose covered with a securely bound stocking can become a most trusted

tool. Simply run the hose over visible bugs to capture them in the stocking, roll the stocking up slowly, tie the top and discard the contents safely. Other non-chemical tools exist as well, such a steamer, that may help remove bugs. Reducing the population before applying product helps ensure success by needing to eliminate fewer bugs.

Next, a PMP may choose from a host of tools designed to kill bed bugs. Some tools provide localized control, for example, like applying a liquid pesticide to an area. These products can contain one or more modes of action, such as a pyrethroid, neonicotinoid, or even entomopathogenic fungi. Additionally, some products claim to provide some level of residual efficacy.

Other tools may target all bugs in an account, including hidden individuals. For example, when performed correctly, structural fumigation can effectively kill all bugs hiding deep within cluttered environments but does not provide any lasting control.

TALK TO FOLKS. One of the most critical activities performed by a PMP is communicating with clients. Customer involvement can be the difference between success and failure. Many companies require client preparation to get the account ready before a PMP performs a treatment. To achieve the best success, clear instructions that outline what to do and why can help ensure success.

Education and empathy also may help increase client retention. PMPs that can answer a customer's questions build trust

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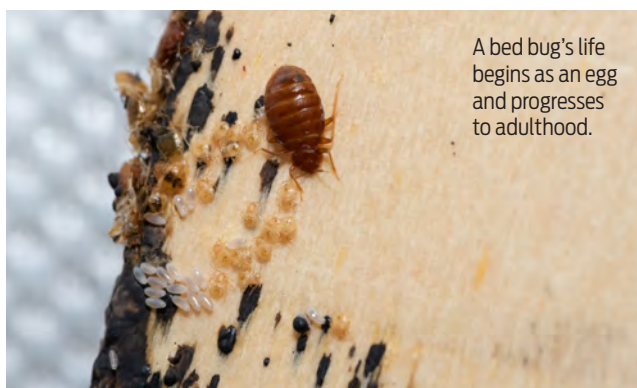
and thought leadership, which can translate into monthly service visits or a call when the next issue arises. Additionally, bed bugs impact people on a deeply emotional level. Listening to a person's concerns with empathy shows that you are a partner working with the client to solve their problem.

DON'T BRING HOME HITCHHIKERS. New technicians on the job need to keep themselves safe and not bring home any unwanted hitchhikers.

First, when leaving an account, visually inspect yourself and all of your belongings for any bed bugs. If you see a bug, destroy it. If you are concerned after treating a particularly heavy infestation, consider bringing a change of clothes or coveralls and place the potentially contaminated clothing into a trash bag before going home.

Upon reentering your home, place everything from the bag loosely into a drier, and run the hot setting for 30 minutes. Be aware: do not put anything into the drier that could be damaged or may damage the machine.

When you are returning to your truck, be mindful of loading your equipment because you do not want to infest your vehicle. If possible, place equipment in the truck bed and keep items out of the cabin. If you suspect bugs in the cabin, perform your own inspection or explore what services your company offers for treating small, portable spaces.



A bed bug's life begins as an egg and progresses to adulthood.

Finally, ask your co-workers what they do. The recommendations above will help keep you safe but are certainly not exhaustive.

You do not have to recreate the wheel, and learning from the wisdom of others may save you a lot of time and heartache. **PCT**

The author is founder and principal consultant at Bug Lessons.

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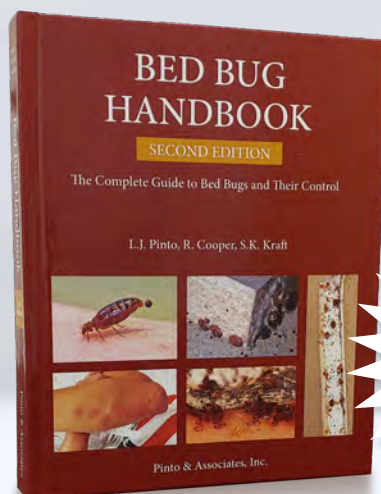
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AI: Helpful Tool or Distraction?

Artificial intelligence (AI) is showing up everywhere, including pest control. But what most people call AI is really a large language model (LLM) — a tool that generates language based on patterns in existing text. It isn't the best with pest biology, but it is great at organizing and rewriting content which makes it useful for technical tasks like writing training materials, drafting protocols and researching regulations.

I use ChatGPT regularly, along with Microsoft Copilot and a few other tools. Our company version of ChatGPT doesn't store prompts or use our data to train its model, which is important for protecting sensitive information. These tools don't replace specialists, but they help get work done faster and more efficiently.

AI AS A TOOL. The main way I use AI is for content flexibility. AI shines when I need to rearrange or reformat my own content. I can feed in a paragraph and ask it to turn it into a list, summary, report or slide outline. I'm not asking it to create new material — I'm asking it to reorganize what I already know. It also helps when drafting or rewriting protocols. It can reframe documents depending on the audience, for example, turning a compliance-heavy standard operating procedure (SOP) into something easier for employees to follow. I also use it to combine content from multiple documents, reformat text into usable chunks or pull-out actionable steps into a checklist.

AI is especially helpful when I'm too close to the content. It gives me a rough draft to edit, which is often faster than writing from scratch. I use ChatGPT's Deep Search feature to scan regulatory and extension websites for overviews. Deep Research differs from standard ChatGPT use by actively searching real-time, verifiable sources across the web — rather than generating answers solely from pre-trained data. If I need to understand how different municipalities handle grease trap regulations or pesticide restrictions, it can pull summaries and link directly to city or county regulatory pages. I still check the sources myself, but it narrows the search significantly.



Used well, AI can help pest professionals move faster, document better and train smarter.

TRAINING CONTENT. I use AI tools to significantly reduce the time it takes to develop training materials. For example, I use them to draft multiple-choice quizzes that help staff prepare for licensing exams, create clear analogies to explain key concepts — such as comparing an odorous house ant (1/8 inch long) to a standard staple, the tip of a crayon, or two stacked pennies — build first drafts of training plans based on desired outcomes and even generate PowerPoint slides directly within PowerPoint using Microsoft Copilot.

Tip: I often begin by asking AI to help me build a strong prompt. I'll say, "Ask me 10 numbered questions to help me generate a prompt to develop a training plan on X." Once I answer, I copy that final prompt into a new thread and run it. This gets better results than vague one-sentence queries.

WHERE IT FAILS. Sometimes AI "hallucinates" — a technical term for when it makes up content that sounds real but isn't. I've asked for academic papers on pests and gotten fake citations with authors, summaries and links. They were well-written, too, but none of them existed when I checked.

AI also can interpret pest control prompts as dangerous or harmful if the language sounds aggressive. I've had it refuse to generate con-

trol steps for certain pests, even when clearly framed as professional and legal. It's also heavily influenced by how you ask. If I sound too positive or negative, it leans that way. That's helpful for brainstorming, but not great when I need a neutral take.

Most importantly, it's usually wordy. You have to ask for concise responses or rewrite what it gives you.

USE WITH CAUTION. Keep your data private. Don't enter customer names, facility issues or proprietary protocols into public tools. Always edit and verify results. The grammar may be perfect, but the facts might not be.

FINAL THOUGHTS. AI won't replace the current need for expertise, field observation or professional judgment, but it is already changing how we work, and that shift is only going to accelerate. Used well, it can help pest professionals move faster, document better and train smarter. It's a tool, and it's going to be part of the job from now on. **PCT**

Ashley Roden, M.S., B.C.E., is the technical director, entomology, at Sprague Pest Solutions. She is a member of the Urban Pest Management Technical Committee (upmtc.org) and a recipient of the 2024 NPMA Impact Award for Women in Pest Management.



Leveraging the Power of Social Media

In a world where most people are scrolling on their phone multiple times a day, it's critical for a small business to utilize one or multiple social media platforms. According to Sprout Social, nearly half of consumers say they interacted with brands more often on social media than six months ago, underscoring the importance of having an online presence. For businesses working with a smaller marketing or advertising budget, social media offers a cost-effective and powerful way to connect with potential customers, boost brand visibility and support business growth. It opens the door for real-time conversations, helping build trust — especially when your posts offer helpful tips or answer common questions. It's also a great space to show off your business's values, introduce your team and share your personality; giving people a reason to feel personally connected. Altogether, these efforts can drive more traffic to your website and make it easier for customers to reach out and schedule your services.

AUDIENCE & PLATFORM. Before launching on social media, consider who you want to reach — different platforms attract different audiences, so understanding your target customer segments will help you choose the right ones. For a pest control business, your audience may include people at various stages of life — first-time renters, new homeowners, growing families, empty nesters or even seasonal or vacation property owners. You might also serve commercial clients with a completely different set of unique needs.

Once you focus on your target audience, which can consist of both existing and potential customers, you can evaluate which platform is best suited to reach that demographic. For example, LinkedIn is a great place to reach commercial clients as it's better suited for professional interactions, while residential customers are better to connect with on visually engaging platforms like Facebook, YouTube, Instagram and TikTok.

SET OBJECTIVES. Creating content for social media isn't just about getting likes and follows.

You'll need to identify a meaningful outcome or action that you're targeting. It's best to be specific when setting a goal so you're able to evaluate success at the end of the year.

As a small business, brand awareness, lead generation and customer retention are examples of goals your business could focus on. Social media helps businesses boost their visibility and build broader brand awareness. Examples of a measurable objective would be increasing followers by 5% or garnering 100,000 impressions on a single social platform in a year.

For a business looking to grow its customer base, lead generation should be a focus with a goal of increasing the number of service form submissions.

If you want to retain existing customers, offering engaging, value-driven content and seasonal offers for social followers is a great way to ensure their loyalty. When building out your objectives, make sure you tie them to the goal you're targeting. If you want to increase followers or impressions, tie it back to a goal of increasing visibility.

DEVELOP CONTENT PILLARS. Once you have your goals and audience nailed down, it's time to brainstorm your content pillars. To build these out, think about what your business has to offer and the goals that you've set. For example, many businesses have a great team of pest professionals perfect to spotlight for a "Meet the Pros" series.

These pillars should all ladder up to the overall goals and objectives you've set forth.

TRACK METRICS. Now that your audience and content strategy is clearly defined, it's important to track how well your content is connecting with them. Social media metrics provide data to help you measure the impact of your posts and the effectiveness of your strategy. These include both organic and paid metrics like engagements (likes, follows, shares), impressions and click-through rates.

While large numbers are great, the key is making sure those numbers come from your target audience — not random or spam ac-

counts. The more qualified the engagement, the more valuable the results.

BEST PRACTICES. When it comes to running a successful social media strategy, there are a few best practices to keep in mind:

- **Consistent Content:** Post on your platforms regularly to keep your audience engaged and ensure the platform algorithms show your content on followers' feeds. Buffer.com found that consistent posters on its management platform received five times more engagement than those who were inconsistent with their content.
- **Engage, Engage, Engage:** Respond to customers who reach out via direct message or comment on your posts to show positive interaction and trusting relationships with followers. Use your channel as an extension of your customer service commitment by monitoring and responding quickly.
- **Quality Over Quantity:** While consistent content is encouraged, prioritize high-quality content or posts your followers would want to see.
- **Hashtag:** Add relevant tags, such as #PestPro or #PestPreventionTips to reach a wider audience.
- **Data:** Stay up-to-date on digital trends that will help you shape your content to focus on what will resonate with your followers and ensure performance results.

As social media is now fully engrained in our lives, it has become a must-have for businesses to flourish. The good news is you don't have to be an expert to achieve meaningful momentum, and the internet offers plenty of tips and tricks to build upon your digital strategy. The most important step to take is to pick a platform and start posting! From there, you can learn along the way and watch your social media success take off. **PCT**

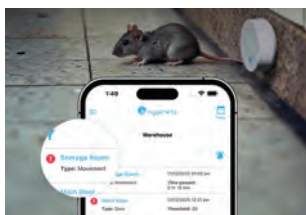
Jim Fredericks is the executive director of the Professional Pest Management Alliance and senior vice president of public affairs for the National Pest Management Association. For more about PPMA, visit www.npmapestworld.org/ppma.

New Products /// JUNE

Hygiene IQ

<https://hygieneiq.com>

Hygiene IQ is a sensor-based technology designed to detect rodent activity and send real-time alerts to technicians' phones, enabling faster responses. Traditional methods of rodent detection often depend on visible traps or manual inspections, which can delay identifying infestations. Hygiene IQ improves this process by using sensors to monitor rodent movement in real time, the company said. After installation in key locations, the sensors detect rodent activity and send notifications via a mobile app. Pest control professionals can then place bait and traps more effectively, reducing the time needed to address infestations.

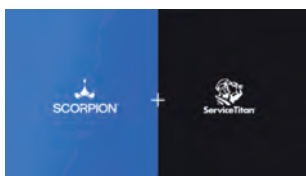


Scorpion and ServiceTitan

<https://www.scorpion.co>

<https://www.servicetitan.com>

Scorpion and ServiceTitan announced the launch of Capacity Marketing Engine, a new AI-powered product designed to help home service providers maximize digital advertising spend, maintain a full schedule and reduce unnecessary



advertising costs. Capacity Marketing Engine is exclusively available to select Scorpion clients now and available for all clients who have purchased Scorpion's RevenueMAX and ServiceTitan's Marketing Pro with Ads Optimizer. Pest control businesses rely on consistent lead generation to fuel growth. However, fluctuating demand, seasonal slowdowns and the unpredictability of consumer needs can lead to inefficiencies in advertising spending and scheduling. Scorpion's Capacity Marketing Engine uses AI-powered automation to adjust advertising spend based on real-time business capacity information from ServiceTitan.

Aedes Mosquito Killers

www.aedesmosquitokillers.com

Aedes Mosquito Killers is a trap that helps control mosquito populations, specifically targeting female *Aedes* mosquitoes, which spread diseases like dengue, chikungunya and Zika virus. The traps mimic the ideal breeding environment for these mosquitoes, attracting them to lay eggs. When mosquitoes make contact with the pesticide, they die and any eggs laid are also eliminated. The device works for up to four weeks, after which the water leaks out, making it safe and preventing it from becoming a new breeding ground, the manufacturer reports. It's a sustainable solution for mosquito control and is registered for sale in most states. **PCT**



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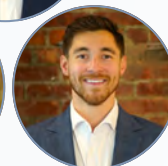
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/// continued from page 77

ing an individual in that's different from the rest forces people to ask new questions and re-investigate their own assumptions," he said.

He said he believes the pest management industry would benefit from having people of various backgrounds in roles that help make a difference. "The more that we promote individuals thinking differently, the more benefit we are going to see," he said.

THE NEXT DECADE. Ramsey said one of his goals during the next 13 years is to increase public access to science and research by making journal articles more affordable.

"I have spent a lot of time thinking about how to democratize the truth," he said. "I work really hard to make sure the work that comes out of my lab is going to



Ramsey is at home in the field. He credits American Pest for providing in-the-field experiences.

be open access, so I pay on the front end to make sure people can read our articles."

Additionally, he uses local and national media appearances to share knowledge and spread awareness about critical pest issues. Ramsey has appeared on Hulu's docuseries "Your Attention Please," as well as in The Washington Post, NPR, CNN, Wired, the Weather Channel, CBS This Morning, The Today Show and more.

Ramsey appreciates that social media is a simple, yet effective tool for spreading science to the masses. "I want to make knowledge truly accessible," he said. "That's why I'm focusing more on social media — to help the younger generation learn about entomology and careers in pest management." **PCT**

The author is PCT's digital editor.

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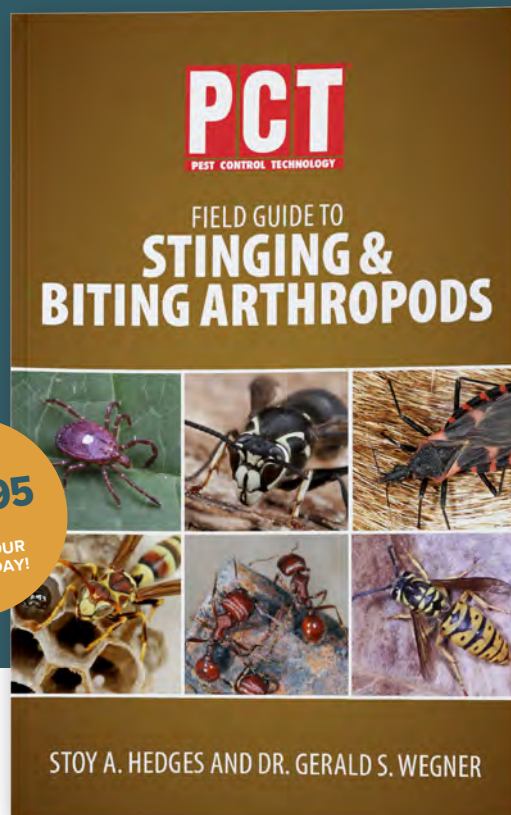
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Cicada Bobblehead Finds a Good Home in Indiana

Ross Miller, owner of Pro Pest Control, Kingman, Ind., was announced as the lucky winner of a cicada bobblehead from PCT. The giveaway was to celebrate last summer's cicada dual brood emergence.

Pro Pest Control serves a six-county region in west central Indiana, and Miller witnessed several large cicada emergences last summer, which he described as an interesting and overwhelming experience.

"The sheer volume of cicadas during the brood emergence was awe-striking," he said. "It's almost like a once-in-a-generation event."

Miller has been involved in the pest control industry for more than 20 years and started Pro Pest Control two-and-a-half-years-ago. He specializes in property management and residential services.

"I've always enjoyed the problem-solving aspect of pest control — it's like solving puzzles for a living," he said.

PCT's Brad Harbison said it was bittersweet to send out the cicada bobblehead, but he is happy that the "high-quality collectible" has found a good home!



Ross Miller holding the cicada bobblehead.

◀ Miller took the cicada bobblehead to a home show.

Scholastic News Highlights 'The Great Bug Man'



Charles Henry Turner

Editor's note: Dan Moreland, publisher emeritus of PCT, shared with the PCT staff a copy of the February 2025 Scholastic News, which his grandson Emmett brought home from school. Included was a feature on Charles Henry Turner (1867-1923), an African American pioneer in the study of insect behavior, whose discoveries included that insects can hear, learn and recognize patterns. This story piqued the interest of the PCT staff, who set out to learn more.

A native of Cincinnati, Ohio, Charles Henry Turner made important advances in the study of insect learning and behavior despite barely eking out a living as a high school science teacher.

He was the first African American to receive a bachelor's and graduate degree from the University of Cincinnati and likely the first to receive a Ph.D. from the University of Chicago. During his 33 years as a scientist, he was de-

scribed as a zoologist, a chemist and an entomologist.

The Scholastic News feature chronicled that Turner discovered honeybees can see different colors; ants can find their way through an obstacle course; and moths can hear.

Unfortunately, Turner's brilliance was largely underappreciated. As noted in an article on worldwildlife.org, instead of a storied career at one of the world's great scientific institutions, Turner "diligently worked as a high school science teacher to make ends meet. Although other unknown factors may have played a part, to historians it is apparent that he was disqualified from loftier appointments solely because of his race. One can only imagine the frustration and hurt that he must have felt by such blatant discrimination."

By the time of Turner's death in 1923 at the age of 56, he had published more than 71 research papers. **PCT**—Brad Harbison



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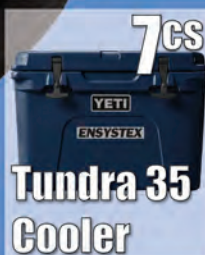
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