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- ▶ Four Service Trends: How Rodent Control Has Changed and Where It's Headed
- ▶ A Bigger Source of Company Revenue
- ▶ Rodent Control Outlook Is Strong
- ▶ Exclusive Research and More!



2021 STATE OF THE **RODENT** MARKET REPORT

RODENT CONTROL SOLUTIONS FOR NOW

Bell Laboratories has long been recognized for the science, research and development that go into the products we manufacture. With a singular focus on rodent control products, we also believe it is critical to factor in how pest management professionals (PMPs) service accounts whenever we develop new rodent control solutions.

The past two years have brought unique challenges to the pest control industry. Embracing new strategies and adapting to changing environments have been crucial for businesses to succeed. One prominent obstacle has been retaining and recruiting skilled workers. With the acute labor shortage throughout the nation, we need to ensure our labor force is as productive as possible.

The Bell iQ line of monitoring products does just that. In addition to providing predictive rodent control, which can prevent callbacks at accounts, iQ traps and stations can be used purely as labor-enhancing instruments. Accounts can be serviced in less than half the time as standard devices, making it easier to get to every jobsite or take on new business, even with personnel shortages. Our time studies have indicated that an individual PMP can increase his or her productivity by as much as three times — all as a result of not having to manually inspect empty traps.

No one likes to lose a smart, hardworking employee, and iQ products can make the technician's job physically easier. Placing iQ traps and stations at accounts eliminates much of the bending, kneeling and climbing on ladders, only to encounter empty rodent devices. Affordable and efficient rodent monitoring technology creates both more satisfied customers and employees.

Bell is pleased to announce we are expanding the iQ line with the addition of four more offerings: A rat bait station (Pulse Rat iQ), a mouse station (Pulse Mouse iQ), a mouse snap trap (Trapper Mouse iQ) and a camouflage station (Weighted Landscape iQ). These affordable products provide the same time savings and rodent knowledge as the current iQ smart devices. The more than doubling of Bell's iQ product offerings is designed to ensure PMPs are equipped to succeed in every type of situation, and be in a position to navigate a tight labor market. Bell promises to make every effort to provide great rodent control solutions to our customers, and to continue our work in the ongoing fight against rodents.

We appreciate your support and thank you for your business. Stay safe and be well.

Steve Levy



President and CEO
 Bell Laboratories



Steve Levy



SERVICE TRENDS: HOW CONTROL HAS CHANGED, WHERE IT'S HEADED

While the basics of controlling rodents have remained the same, PMPs said the pests, protocols and consumer attitudes about rodents are evolving.

► TREND #1 – Rodents Are Increasingly Problematic

Over the past seven years, mice and rats generally became more problematic for pest management companies.

According to the 2021 PCT State of the Rodent Control Market survey, sponsored by Bell Laboratories and compiled by independent research firm Readex Research, more PMPs cited house mice (76 percent), Norway rats (52 percent) and roof rats (44 percent) as challenges in their markets compared to 2014.

House mice generated the largest number of service calls last year, reported 41 percent of PMPs, followed by roof rats (30 percent) and Norway rats (15 percent).

Loss of habitat played a role. “The rodent population exploded” in Greater

PROBLEMATIC PESTS

What rodent species tend to be problematic in your market area?

	2021	2014
house mice	76%	69%
Norway rats	52%	40%
roof rats	44%	37%
deer mice	25%	N/A
meadow voles	14%	N/A
pack rats	9%	N/A
other	5%	9%
none	1%	1%
no answer	0%	1%

Source: Readex Research; Respondents: 2021: 170; 2014: 528; Respondents could select multiple answers

Houston after massive flooding from Hurricane Harvey in 2017 pushed rodents out of parks and bayous, said Del Lawson, vice president of operations at Modern Pest Control in Katy, Texas.

“When you change the natural habitat where they are, it drives them to the

houses, and all they need is a small crack and you’ve got rodent problems,” he said. The company’s rodent exclusion work increased three-fold as a result.

In Greater Los Angeles, construction on vacant lots and open land has displaced rats and their natural predators, including coyotes, snakes, owls and hawks. “I think we’re losing a lot of the natural controls for rats, which is problematic,” said John Etheridge, Seashore Pest Control, Huntington Beach, Calif. Homeless encampments provide the pests with easy access to food, he said.

Marty Overline of Aardvark Pest Management said rodent infestations in downtown Philadelphia decreased after an initial pandemic spike. “It’s all about the food stream for commensal rodents, and the food stream really, really dried up, so the population diminished. But I would say it’s going to rebound here in the next coming year,” he said, as people return to office buildings and colleges.

► TREND #2 – Rodent Control is Year-Round

Rodent control has become a year-round activity for more pest control companies. According to the 2021 PCT State of the Rodent Control Market survey, 34 percent of PMPs reported no seasonal difference when performing this service, up from 21 percent in 2014.

Glenn Fordham, owner/operator of Olympic Pest & Termite Control in metro Atlanta, has noticed the shift in rodent control work. “It was very seasonal; it’s not that way anymore. It has

peaks and valleys, but it’s almost nonstop now,” he said.

Fewer PMPs claimed fall as their busiest rodent season: just 29 percent in 2021 compared to 41 percent seven years ago.

Still, the arrival of cold fall weather has companies like Custom West Pest Control in Missoula, Mont., switching to “rodent mode.”

“You’ll see the mice start to move indoors in September, October. Then they really get (aggressive) by October, November,” said Nate Nunnally, Custom West CEO.

BUSIEST SEASON

What season tends to be the busiest for your location providing rodent control services?

	2021	2014
fall	29%	41%
winter	21%	25%
summer	9%	6%
spring	6%	6%
no seasonal difference	34%	21%
no answer	1%	1%

Source: Readex Research; Respondents: 2021: 170; 2014: 528





► TREND #3 – Protocols Emphasize Non-Toxic Control Methods

While most PMPs used multiple tools and services to control rodents, the primary methods of control involved baits (25 percent) and traps (18 percent), found the 2021 PCT State of the Rodent Control Market survey.

Rodent baiting most often was performed on both the interior and exterior of buildings, reported 59 percent of PMPs.

Rodenticides, however, are facing increased regulatory and consumer scrutiny. PMPs in follow-up interviews said a growing number of customers on the West Coast do not want toxicants used on their properties, and some even ask for rodents to be live-trapped and relocated, which PMPs said they refuse to do.

In response, pest management companies like Clark Pest Control, a Rollins company in Lodi, Calif., have updated their rodent control protocols to stress IPM principles. This includes monitoring with non-toxic bait blocks and documenting rodent activity before toxic bait is used in stations.

“That update of the protocol causes our technicians to be reminded again of why we are putting that bait in the station to begin with,” said Blair Smith, Clark’s technical manager. “We’re trying to look at the whole picture, solving the source of the problem, and no longer will we be always having an active in a bait station at

a customer’s home, for example. Depending on the site, we really need to justify the use of that specific active.”

While 53 percent of PMPs said their rodent control service was just as dependent on rodenticide as it was five years ago, 38 percent said they had increased their use of non-toxic rodent control products in the past year. These products included traps (83 percent), exclusion (75 percent), glueboards (47 percent), monitoring non-toxic baits (22 percent) and repellents (14 percent).

Non-toxic control methods, however, can’t always deliver immediate knock-down like rodenticides, which when used prudently are important tools to reduce

high rodent populations and protect structures facing excessive rodent pressure.

Trapping neophobic rats, for instance, can be a time-consuming challenge. That’s why Fordham of Olympic Pest & Termite Control pre-baits snap traps; he doesn’t set them until the trap-shy rats are comfortable taking the bait and no longer consider the traps a threat.

The right trap bait can help. Etheridge of Seahorse Pest Control super-glues cat treats to the metal actuator of wooden snap traps. The treats, which have a goeey center, crunchy exterior and strong odor, draw in the rats like magic. “One single night and they go right to it, and wham! They’re dead,” he said.

PRIMARY PRODUCTS USED

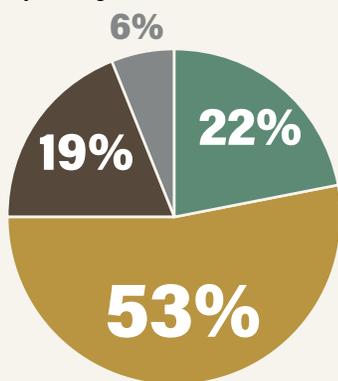
What is your location’s *primary* product/service regimen for controlling rodents?

	2021	2014
#1 bait stations	37%	36%
rodent exclusion	14%	10%
baits: soft	12%	7%
traps: snap	12%	14%
baits: block	11%	16%
traps: glue	4%	8%
traps: multiple-catch/curiosity	3%	3%
place packs	2%	2%
baits: pellet	2%	1%
tracking powders	2%	1%
baits: liquid	1%	0%
electronic rodent monitoring	1%	N/A
fumigants	1%	0%

Source: Readex Research; Respondents: 2021: 170; 2014: 528

CHANGE IN DEPENDENCE ON RODENTICIDES

Are your location's rodent control services more or less dependent on rodenticide use today than they were five years ago?

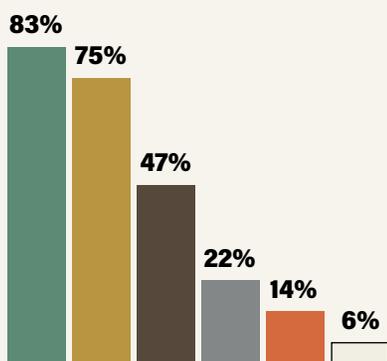


- more dependent
- about the same
- less dependent
- cannot compare; not involved 5 years ago

Source: Readex Research; Respondents: 170

NON-TOXIC PRODUCTS USED

What non-toxic rodent control products were utilized most frequently at your location in the past 12 months?



- traps
- exclusion
- glueboards
- monitoring non-toxic bait
- repellents
- other

Source: Readex Research; Respondents: 64; Respondents could select multiple answers

► TREND #4 – Exclusion Gains Prominence

In follow-up interviews, PMPs cited the importance of rodent-proofing structures, or exclusion, in achieving successful rodent control. As a result, more pest control companies either include exclusion as part of their rodent control program or offer it as a separate, add-on service.

Last year, three-quarters of PMPs used exclusion to help control rodent issues, and 14 percent used it as their primary control regimen, up 4 percent from 2014, according to the 2021 PCT State of the Rodent Control Market survey.

“If you can get all the holes plugged, that’s usually 90 percent of your rodent control issue, and then you just have to deal with the last few that are inside,” said David Jennett, owner of Green Valley Pest Control & Lawn Care in Creston, Iowa.

Exclusion, however, takes effort, and it can be a challenge to locate where the rodents are gaining entry. It’s much simpler to put out bait stations, said Jennett.

“That’s the quick and easy way to do it. The exclusion is what takes the time, but in the long run, it really does the customer the most service and will cut back on your callbacks later. If you’re just putting bait out, you’re always going to have a problem, but if you get the holes plugged and get exclusion taken care of, that’s going to solve the problem and you will have a satisfied customer,” he said.

All buildings can be rodent-proofed, assured Overline, Aardvark Pest Management. “You can determine which routes of entry and the routes they take in the interior of the building. You’ve just got to understand rodent biology and rodent habits and you can determine which way they’re moving throughout a building,” he said.

PMPs said most rodent entry points in structures already exist. “They’re made; whether they’re construction flaws or from not maintaining a house,” said Fordham, Olympic Pest & Termite Control.

Barry Weprin, owner of Weprin Pest Control in Katy, Texas, a licensed sanitarian, said most roof rats in his market enter homes where improperly sealed air conditioning pipes penetrate structures. “Find the opening where the rodents are going into the house. If you get it right, that’s the end of the problem,” he said.

Effective rodent-proofing means less trapping and baiting are needed, added Nunnally, Custom West Pest Control. “I can definitely tell you that’s been a huge part of our success in dealing with mice intrusion issues,” he said.

The average callback rate for rodent control service was 5.6 percent, found the PCT survey. ●



ABOUT THE SURVEY

The 2021 PCT State of the Rodent Control Market survey was sponsored by Bell Laboratories and compiled by Readex Research, a privately held research firm in Stillwater, Minn. A sample of 4,074 pest control company owners, executives and technical directors was systematically selected from the PCT database. Data was collected from 182 respondents — a 4 percent response rate — via online survey from July 7-15, 2021. Twelve respondents indicated their companies did not provide rodent control services and were terminated from the survey. The margin of error for percentages based on 170 respondents is plus or minus 7.4 percentage points at the 95 percent confidence level. Charts may not add up to 100 percent due to rounding.

RODENTS: A BIGGER SOURCE OF COMPANY REVENUE



Rodent control has become a greater source of income for pest control companies.

Last year, it accounted for 20.3 percent of overall revenue on average at company locations, according to the 2021 PCT State of the Rodent Control Market survey. That's an increase from the 14.6 percent average reported in 2014, the first year the PCT survey was conducted.

As such, rodent control has taken on more significance at businesses over the past five years, said 57 percent of pest management professionals, up from 44 percent who responded this way seven years ago. While rodent control was performed on residential (91 percent) and commercial (78 percent) properties, 67 percent of PMPs said residential rodent control generated the most income at their locations.

Calls from homeowners in Huntington Beach, Calif., kept Seashore Pest Control hopping. "The incidence of rats is increasing dramatically in my area," said President John Etheridge, who was working in the field alongside his 17 employees to keep up with demand for rodent control service.

"I hate to say we're losing the battle but the phone calls of, 'I have a new rat problem,' have increased fivefold in the last three years," he said.

The COVID-19 pandemic had an extremely or somewhat positive impact on rodent control work, reported 43 percent of survey respondents.

People noticed rodent activity more because they spent more time at home working and attending school. They also left all kinds of food in commercial kitchens, work break rooms, office desks and dormitories when stay-at-home mandates were enforced.

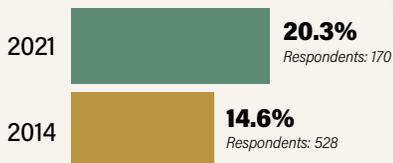
"That gave rodents a lot of opportunity to exploit what was left behind," said Marty Overline, president of Aardvark Pest Management in Philadelphia. He spent considerable time throwing out abandoned food items at commercial accounts to help deter mouse infestations.

Nearly half of PMPs (48 percent) said rodent populations were more visible in their service areas because access to traditional food sources was reduced by the pandemic. ●





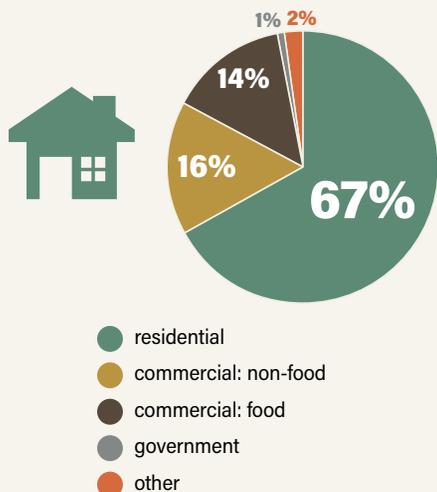
AVERAGE PERCENTAGE OF REVENUE FROM RODENT CONTROL SERVICES



Source: Readex Research

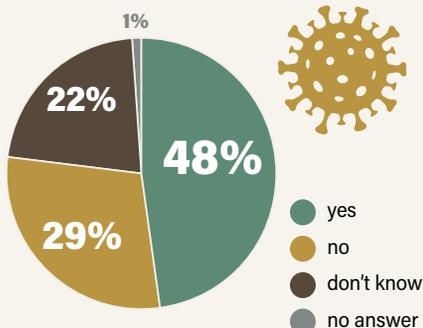
RODENT CONTROL MARKET GENERATING MOST INCOME

What rodent control market generates the most income for your location?



Source: Readex Research; Respondents: 170

HAVE RODENT POPULATIONS BECOME MORE VISIBLE IN YOUR MARKET AREA AS A RESULT OF LESS ACCESS TO THEIR TRADITIONAL FOOD SOURCES BECAUSE OF THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC?



Source: Readex Research; Respondents: 170

THE FUTURE: OUTLOOK IS STRONG

According to the 2021 PCT State of the Rodent Control Market survey, 57 percent of PMPs expected revenue from rodent control services to increase in 2021 compared to last year.

Barry Weprin, Weprin Pest Control, said the potential for rodent control is “unlimited.” Rat pressure in his Houston market is “really high,” and he performs twice-monthly rat control service for some customers. “You’re never going to run out of rodent control work,” said Weprin, who’s been providing the service for 35 years.

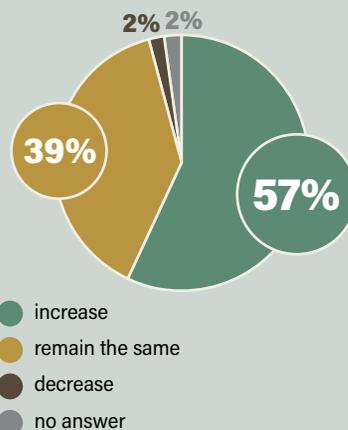
The housing market is hot as well, and as long as new construction disturbs habitat, rodents will seek new shelter in structures. “I think you’re always going to have the opportunity to deal with rodent movement,” said Nate Nunnally, Custom West Pest Control.

Looking ahead, PMPs said technology will help improve rodent control programs, such as by reducing labor costs (42 percent), clarifying documentation (41 percent), providing training benefits (38 percent) and helping to differentiate their service (37 percent).

Ashley Roden, a regional entomologist at Sprague Pest Solutions, Tacoma, Wash., would like to see new products and active ingredients introduced to control rodents. “We need more products, more options. I always welcome other options,” she said. ●

EXPECTED CHANGE IN PERCENTAGE OF REVENUE FROM RODENT CONTROL SERVICES

Compared with 2020, how do you expect the percentage of revenue generated from your location’s rodent control services to change in 2021?



Source: Readex Research; Respondents: 170

CHANGE IN SIGNIFICANCE OF RODENT CONTROL TO YOUR PEST CONTROL BUSINESS IN THE PAST FIVE YEARS

	2021	2014
more significant	57%	44%
neither more nor less significant	34%	52%
less significant	2%	4%
cannot compare; not involved 5 years ago	6%	NA
no answer	1%	0%

Source: Readex Research; Respondents: 2021: 170; 2014: 528

THE POWER OF iQ

**AFFORDABLE & EFFICIENT
RODENT MONITORING TECHNOLOGY.
WHATEVER YOUR PROBLEM,
iQ IS THE SOLUTION:**

THE iQ SOLUTIONS

- ▶ Relentless call backs? → Predictive rodent control
- ▶ Safety issues? → Less ladders, bending & kneeling
- ▶ Open positions? → Service routes in half the time
- ▶ Losing customers? → Instant proof service is working
- ▶ Employee satisfaction? → Solving problems, not checking empty traps



iQ PRODUCTS

POWERED BY
Bell
SENSING TECHNOLOGIES

AVAILABLE NOW IN
WORKWAVE
PestPac



AVAILABLE NOW

AVAILABLE SOON

For information on how the Power of iQ products can enhance your rodent control service and solve problems at your accounts, contact your local Pest Control Distributor or visit www.bellsensing.com

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