



## PARTNERING TO BANISH PESKY PESTS, AVOID CLOSURE



When customers see pests within a food service establishment, this is often a clear indication of inadequate response to pest activity. Be mindful of what the service provider is doing and assist the company (where possible) to gain control.

## “Closed due to inadequate pest control.”

These words invoke fear, embarrassment and guilt in the food service industry. Restaurants, retail stores, hotels and other businesses involved with food service are constantly being scrutinized by public health inspectors to ensure these premises are well managed and free of pest infestation. Public health inspectors play an important role in making sure the public is protected from disease and food-borne pathogens, something that rodents, birds and insects can readily spread. It is the responsibility of the food service industry and pest management professionals to work together to provide safe food premises and ensure the public's health. Typically, restaurant closures are triggered when a public health inspector conducts a regularly scheduled inspection of the premise and finds established rodent or cockroach activity or contaminated food on food contact surfaces. However, a restaurant closure may also occur when a member of the public or a store employee reports pest activity to the public health department and the subsequent inspection verifies the report. Restaurant owners and operators can take a variety of steps to prevent a public health inspection closure.

## Ensure the Response is Adequate

When the presence of pests is known by the pest management provider, the control approach must be sufficient to crush the population quickly. If the response is inadequate, the infestation and risk of closure will be prolonged or, even worsen, the population will grow larger between service visits. An effective pest management program identifies pest presence through inspection and a network of monitoring devices, with additional action initiated when deemed necessary due to activity. Corrective action may include identification and disposal of infested products, insecticide application for insects, setting of snap traps for rodents, cleaning and enhanced service frequency.

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## Foster Communication and Cooperation

A strong working relationship between the pest management provider and food service personnel is critical to preventing pest infestation. When pest activity is first detected, this must be immediately relayed to the provider so the company can take action. Similarly, when the provider identifies pest activity or finds conditions on-site that could lead to infestation, this must be communicated to the client without delay, so that action can be taken within the needed time frame. Good communication is also one of the key determining factors of whether pest management will be successful. Additionally, cooperation is needed to implement the necessary corrective actions, such as providing access so that the pest management provider can perform work after hours, opening up void areas where pests could be harbouring, providing maintenance support, enhancing cleaning efforts and removing food items and utensils from areas to prevent contamination during treatment.

## Respond Promptly to Recommendations

Often pest activity is the result of underlying factors within or around the perimeter of a facility. An important part of the pest management provider's service is to report structural and sanitation conditions present on-site that promote pest infestation and then follow-up with clients to ensure positive results. Equally, if not more importantly, is the response to these recommendations; where response is inadequate, the risk of pest activity developing escalates as well as the risk of a public health inspection closure.

Facility Maintenance Building maintenance — both in terms of structural upkeep and thorough sanitation practices — is critical to the prevention of pest activity. Structural issues, such as holes and gaps around utility lines within exterior walls and open or poorly sealed doors and windows, will allow rodent, insect and possibly bird entry. Interior structural deficiencies, such as missing grout between floor tiles, holes within interior walls and plumbing leaks, also promote pest infestation by providing harbourage sites and favourable habitat. Sanitation

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deficiencies that allow food material accumulation both inside and outside the facility may result in pest infestation; it not only attracts pests to the building but provides the needed resources for survival and growth. While site maintenance is a direct cost to the facility, it is something that will reward management through reduced pest pressure as well as elevated employee and customer satisfaction. Pest management programs must be proactive to achieve the desired result of protecting an establishment from pest activity. This goal can only be achieved through a partnership that provides a focused approach to strong sanitation practices, sound building maintenance and quick detection with appropriate action to pest presence (should it occur). By working together, risk to public health is avoided and brand image is not only maintained but strengthened.

The late Steven Graff who wrote this article was the Quality Assurance Manager at Abell Pest Control. Holding a Biological Science Honours degree from the University of Guelph, he has written and developed many nationally recognized papers, articles and training programs in the field of Pest Control, Integrated Pest Management and related fields.

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By Steven Graff