Safer, greener control through intelligent pest management

Pest control is not the most popular topic, but in hospitality and food service industries it is always an important, if hidden issue. Pests do exist and they are very good at finding their way into humans' living and working spaces.

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Rodents are particularly effective invaders, carrying diseases, causing damage to buildings and spoiling foodstuffs. Using rodenticides is one of the more conventional methods of controlling their numbers. However, there are potential risks to people and the environment from the use of rodenticide products.

Following changes in European Regulations, the UK's Health and Safety Executive (HSE) realised the need to protect people and non-target wildlife from unnecessary exposure to toxins.

The UK Government and the HSE launched the Campaign for Responsible Rodenticide Use (of which Mitie is a fully committed participant). This supports a stewardship scheme founded on principles to promote responsible rodenticide use, and good practice, by all professional pest controllers.

To the general public and many commercial clients, this legal change has probably slipped by under the radar. For those in the pest control business, it signalled the potential to change the face of pest control practices whilst managing an ever growing rodent problem.

Over the last three years, Mitie has recorded a 35% increase in rat activity. With this in mind, an intelligent and co-ordinated approach to rodent control without the over-use of rodenticides is becoming more important.

Don't spread it around

Fortunately, there is a user-friendly solution at hand. By using a comprehensive range of techniques bespoke to each premises, and employing a targeted and monitored strategy, it is possible to deliver 'intelligent pest management'.

Conventional pest control methods tend to adopt the blanket approach of laying down pesticides all over a premises with hope of dispatching as many pests as possible. This is not the most efficient means of pest control, neither is it environmentally friendly and can pose safety issues for employees and clients.

Excessive application of pesticides or rodenticides certainly increases contamination threat to any consumable goods being stored, or organic produce being grown on site, which is a disastrous risk in a food service industry. No establishment wants to risk poisoning anyone.
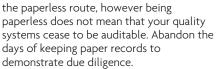
Get smart

The most effective pest control strategy is one that monitors and pre-empts pest activity patterns so rodenticide use can be targeted – if required. Mitie employs IT based systems that improve methods of reporting and increase the percentage of effectiveness. We achieve this through our online portal, Pest Alert.

By using an online system, pest controllers and clients can monitor all pest management activities, and give recommendations that help reduce reliance on pesticides such as housekeeping, stacking, proofing and habitat management.

The system logs visits and actions supported by photographs; it also measures completion and compliance as evidence for auditors. Being online means that all relevant information is accessible via PC or mobile devices, giving total control over pest risk.

Paperless and auditable

Why drown in a sea of unnecessary paper when all the information you need to access, and records you need to keep, are available at the touch of a button? One of the best advantages of an IT-based pest management system is that it is paperless.

Many clients will initially shy away from the paperless route, however being paperless does not mean that your quality systems cease to be auditable. Abandon the days of keeping paper records to demonstrate due diligence.

If they are not regularly updated, a business could be exposed to legal proceedings or worse, experience an audit failure.

Online systems change behaviours, as the focus shifts from reactive pest control activity to proactive prevention, leading to better risk management and reduction of pest activity.

Service in record time with unrivalled efficiency

Online reporting facilitates better engagement, accountability and responsive action on a pest control programme. A well informed decision is usually the correct one and there is no room for ambiguity when every pest incident and action is logged in real time for all interested parties to see.

By combining technology and encouraging proactive client input you can achieve cleaner, safer pest control. It does not have to be a burden to maintain your records, and the auditors have a secure, paperless trail to follow your progress.

So, even though we do not want to talk about the unpleasant topic of pests in the food sector, we should.

Now there is technology in place to manage their presence with ease, safety and efficiency. It gives us a head start, without the headache. ■