



Preventive Pest Control

WHY BOTHER?

There are four good reasons for keeping pests out of food premises:

Legislation -

The demands of The Food Safety Act 1990 (incorporating The Food Hygiene (General) Regulations), The Prevention of Damage by Pests Act 1949, The Public Health Acts and The Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974, are strict and can lead to fines of £20,000 per charge and closure of unhygienic premises.

Contamination -

Pest-borne bacteria, viruses, parasites and fungal spores, rodent hairs and droppings, bird droppings and dead insects may spread disease including food poisoning and lead to prosecution.

Depreciation -

Lost production because of infestation, recall of contaminated goods, damage to wiring, cables, pipes or packaging, rejection or devaluation of product, can all be expensive consequences of pest activity.

Reputation -

Loss of goodwill and consequent loss of business resulting from publication of a prosecution for pest infestation can be the most costly of all.



WHAT TO DO?

Exclusion is the first part of the principle of pest control. The others are *Restriction*, *Inspection* and *Eradication*.

EXCLUSION:

Problems in premises arise because of inadequate building maintenance or poor building design.

Doors, windows, fan vents, air grilles and hoist apertures are potential entry points for rodents and insects. Birds may also enter under eaves or via despatch bays and loading areas. Roller shutter doors provide footholds for rodents and nest sites can even be found in the shutter box.

All doors and windows should fit well and the frames be sealed at the wall junction with mastic. Metal sheeting should be used to rodent proof any gaps at junctions of walls, doors, floors and ceilings, holes filled with wire wool or chicken wire embedded in cement, gaps under doors filled with specially fitted nylon bristle strips.

Opening windows should be fitted, wherever there is a risk of product contamination, with made-to-measure insect screens of the appropriate mesh to exclude flies and other flying insects but permit adequate ventilation. Large openings can be fitted with plastic strip curtain doors or fast acting doors that allow forklifts to pass through but deter birds, rodents and insects.

Areas around the perimeter of food premises should be kept clear of weeds and waste or rubbish and be inspected regularly.

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Sound stock control and inspection of incoming goods is vital. Ingredients from suppliers may be infested (what are they doing to prevent it?), as may packaging or other materials brought on to site, including machinery and equipment.

Vehicles delivering goods and collecting waste or returned products may become infested and deliver pests regularly.

Neighbours' premises share a common interest in keeping the area free from pests. Talk to the occupiers of nearby buildings and co operate in preventing infestation.

RESTRICTION:

Deny pests their creature comforts. Deprive pests of warmth, food and shelter. Proof all places where internal ducts and pipes pass through partition walls, roofs and under floor spaces. Remove structural harbourage or at least identify such areas and provide means for regular inspection hatches, etc.

Prompt, efficient waste disposal should eliminate residues of food and drink in 'empty' containers. Incinerators and refuse tips on site are notoriously difficult to keep tidy. It is far better to have all waste removed from the premises for disposal. Tins, bottles, drums, casks, barrels and similar containers should be washed out immediately they become empty and before being discarded. Sort waste into categories of wet and dry, combustible and non combustible, then place the sorted waste in bins which in turn should be taken as soon as possible to a special refuse compound well segregated from the main activity of the premises.

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Where different classes of waste are being dealt with, the bins should be labelled or given a different colour of lid for each class.

The refuse compound should be constructed in smooth rendered concrete with ground drains so that the whole compound can be hosed down immediately after each refuse collection.

Waste should be removed from food manufacturing and catering premises daily, preferably by the employment of a container service. The waste is then loaded only once into a bulk container and taken away without further disturbance or spillage.

Refuse bins must be adequate in number and kept in good condition. Regular washing is also most important since flies are often found breeding in large numbers in bins because caked deposits form and remain in the bins between emptyings. Premises which have large amounts of bulky and salvageable refuse, like paper or tins, should employ special containers or baling techniques for the purpose.

Regular stripping down and scrupulous cleaning and inspection of all food production and processing machinery, structural and work surfaces; thorough cleaning of ventilation trunking and ducts is essential and may best be carried out by a specialist hygiene contractor.

Staff facilities, locker rooms, changing rooms and washrooms also need regular inspection and staff should be discouraged from taking food out of canteen or dining areas for consumption in such areas. Staff that bring their own food should do so in plastic containers and bags only, to prevent bringing in pests from outside. Toilets should have raised urinals and well fixed WC pans.

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Dead stores of unused items can provide undisturbed harbourage for rodents and insects. Disturb them.

Domestic pets are not permitted in food production or storage areas and should not be tolerated on the premises at all.

Cleaners must be well motivated, properly trained and appropriately equipped for the importance of their task.

Sweeping, washing down and the use of high pressure jets may conflict with some pest control baiting or insecticide applications. Co operation between cleaners and pest control contractors is therefore essential in the interests of harmony and efficiency.

Lift shafts are often reservoirs of infestation because their rough surfaces provide harbourages for crawling insects such as cockroaches. Debris accumulating at the bottom may attract rodents.

Floor cavities should be checked and sealed around lifts and the motor housing inspected.

Any wall or floor cavities not sealed off should have inspection hatches fitted, as should all false ceilings and pipe ducts. Elevator and conveyor intakes should have tight fitting doors at the delivery end.

Drains, pipes and gullies must be kept clean and in perfect condition, as must all sanitaryware and plumbing. Water should be inaccessible to rodents and all insulation of pipes and tanks must be kept free from cracks and holes that could harbour pests.

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Temperature control is important as both insects and rodents thrive in warmth and insects breed more rapidly.

Dust control is also important and adequate dust extraction equipment should be provided along with vacuum cleaning equipment. The use of compressed air for cleaning should be severely restricted.

As far as practicable, all fixtures and equipment should be raised above floor level on legs to prevent dust accumulating to attract pests, and to make cleaning easier. Storage cabinets should not have false bottoms.

It is good practice to keep different classes of goods well separated from each other in storage.

Goods which are known to be infested or susceptible to infestation should be removed immediately and where this is not possible, they should be placed in a separate controlled location to avoid cross infestation. All materials and finished products should be separately stored.

Stacks should not be built against walls or into corners of the warehouse or storeroom and should be kept clear of doors, windows and ventilators.

In large stores the best practice is to mark out the stacking plan with white painted lines on the floor, leaving half a metre of space around each stow for sweeping, washing, inspection and baiting.

It is also useful to paint corners and wall-floor angles white, for this encourages effective cleaning in the very places where residues accumulate and where the first signs of infestation are likely to occur.



Storage areas should be well-lit to aid pest detection.

For any stack constructed with a view to fumigation, isolation from walls is essential.

INSPECTION:

As part of a comprehensive pest prevention programme a pest control contractor will carry out regular inspections for pests, often using different personnel dedicated to its quality assurance system.

The responsibility for the premises, however, cannot be abdicated to a contractor! It is the management's responsibility to ensure that one of its team is nominated as the link co-ordinator between the contractor and the company.

One of that person's duties should be to monitor the pest control status of their premises separately from the contractor. This becomes part of a quality check on the work done, but also builds up detailed knowledge of the site and any associated problems.

All the workforce should be aware of who the nominated person is and that any report of pests should go to that person for investigation.

Inspection is the tool that stops pest problems becoming a crisis and the more eyes involved the better!



ERADICATION:

Despite all your best preventive measures, food premises will remain vulnerable. A local authority environmental health department will offer advice, and possibly a treatment, a do it yourself pesticide may deal with a limited infestation but remember that pesticide residues in food are as unwelcome as pests. The best course of action is therefore to employ a reputable pest control contractor (preferably a member of The British Pest Control Association), who will survey, report, detect, monitor and treat pests as necessary on an agreed contract basis.

Risk assessment should be part of the system and the reporting should provide evidence that the client is observing 'due diligence' as required by the legislation.

Pest control is part of the management responsibilities, and is not to be undertaken lightly. Freedom from pests depends upon eternal vigilance, and any sign of infestation must be reported promptly to management, recorded in a Pests Report Book, and appropriate action taken quickly.