

Q&A from presentation:

Pest Control in Food Facilities; Identification, Mitigation & Prevention

Matt Frye, PhD NYSIPM Program Cornell University

What is some good advice to tell managers or owners that are dealing with pests that is more than just telling them to get a pest control operator. Anything that we could recommend they do differently to help abate the pests?

- This is a great question because the mentality of a pest problem tends to be that the pest control operator has failed. However, in most cases, it is the site who has failed by creating an environment that allows pests to enter and provides food and water for them to consume. What can you say to the site? Well, I would start by helping them to properly identify the pest they are dealing with and provide information about that organism. What does it eat? Where does it like to live? Where in their location is the pest breeding? You can also help them realize that hiring a pest professional is not going to address the exclusion and sanitation issues that sustains pests, but only help to reduce the population. The site plays a big role in not only reducing pest problems, but also preventing new infestations.

What are some tips for operators to do themselves when they have fruit flies?

- The first step is to determine which species of fruit fly is present, or if it's a fruit fly at all. We did not cover fly identification in great detail, but there are a number of small flies that are easily confused with one another, including the red-eyed fruit fly and the dark-eyed fruit fly. Accurate identification of the fly will provide insights about the pest's preferred breeding sites. For example, perhaps they are indeed red-eyed fruit flies, and they are breeding on overripe bananas or in an onion that rolled behind a piece of equipment. To resolve fly problems, they have to find and eliminate the source, or prevent access to the source. Oftentimes sites will try things like vinegar traps and light traps, but these only harvest adult flies, whereas removal of the food source can eliminate the problem for the long term.

Why does it matter if a rat is Norway or roof?

- Differentiating between a Norway and roof rat is important because the two critters tend to nest in very different locations and use different parts of the building. Whereas Norway rats prefer to burrow in the soil, roof rats prefer to nest up high. If your client catches a roof rat and does not identify it correctly, they might spend their efforts trying to manage the pest at ground level, whereas roof rats can spend their time overhead and come down to floor level only for food/water. Implementing an exclusion plan for roof rats often involves detailed inspections of upper parts of the building, whereas Norway rat inspections tend to occur at ground level up to six feet. Keep in mind that behaviors are malleable and Norway rats can be found up high and roof rats can be found low, but the general behavior patterns are helpful when implementing a management plan that involves inspection, trapping/baiting, and exclusion.

Are there any pests that can live in a walk in cooler, consuming spills? Or does the temperature deter/kill them?

- Mice can live inside walk-in coolers when they nest within the insulated walls. They may also forage in coolers if the unit is not properly sealed. See the following article for more information: <https://www.pctonline.com/article/pct0814-rodents-commercial-freezers/>

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Is 10 days an effective turnaround time to see a change in rodent/insect prevention?

- Ten days is a reasonable timeframe if the pest problem was an introduction or very small population. However, if it is a severe problem, ten days would be unreasonable. This is because pest management efforts will not kill all individuals in the population immediately, leaving some to continue to forage and even reproduce. Too, unless the source of the problem is identified, new individuals could be introduced to sustain that pest population.

What can be done about roaches within the grease trap?

- This is a very challenging situation because once a grease trap is infested, it may be difficult to gain control without a deep cleaning of the system, then constant vigilance to maintain cleanliness. Cockroach management is accomplished with a number of techniques, from vacuuming and trapping to baiting and spraying. A qualified pest professional can work closely with site staff to advise on the best approach to reducing cockroach numbers during the cleaning process and afterward. Some insights on the type of cleaning products available for maintenance are here: <https://www.pctonline.com/news/bio-sanitation-control-cockroaches-commercial-kitchens/>

How likely is it to take roaches home when inspecting a severe infestation where baby roaches are present?

This is a valid concern, as cockroaches can hitchhike on people or personal items from severe infestations. Keep in mind that in order for cockroaches to cause an infestation in your home, you would have to take home a pregnant adult female or a male and female cockroach that could reproduce. Even if a few nymphs traveled home with you, they might not survive long enough to reproduce.

- That said, the approach we recommend is similar to that of dealing with bed bugs (and there are tutorials online to help with this – we also have a factsheet). Briefly:
 - If there is a chance that you'll be visiting an infested site, plan ahead and have a set of clothing to change into somewhere outside your home, such as a garage. If you don't have such a place, create a transition zone by leaving a white sheet on the floor where you will walk in, change your clothes and ball everything up.
 - Inspect yourself upon leaving the site, including patting yourself down and uncuffing clothing. Remember that cockroaches like dark, tight spaces and would likely crawl up from the floor level.
 - Upon returning home, change in your transition zone into clean clothing you left out and place all potentially exposed items from the day, including the balled up sheet, into a large sealable plastic bag.
 - Store the bag in a secured location until you can put it in a clothes drier. Run the drier on high heat for 20 minutes to kill all insects, then wash the clothing and sheet according to label instructions.
 - Have monitors in your home to determine if any introductions occurred. You can purchase glue boards at big box stores an online.