



Erich Hobelman
Business Development Manager
Douglas Products

I became a sales representative for Vikane[®] gas fumigant in 1996 when I joined Dow AgroSciences, and I joined Douglas Products in 2015. I am based in Florida and now serve the state with the exception of the southeast corner. I also support customers in North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia, Alabama, Mississippi and Louisiana for ProFume[®] gas fumigant as well.

Your background?

I grew up working in my father's pest control business, Hobelmann Exterminating in St. Petersburg, Florida. We did fumigation, subterranean termite treatments and general pest control, everything with the exception of lawn care. When more and more of my dad's industry friends gave us their fumigation leads, fumigation became our main company focus. We were doing 500+ fumigations per year with one crew.

Hobelmann Exterminating was actually started in New Jersey by my grandparents. In 1946 they moved to Florida and the office was in my grandparents' home, and I remember my grandmother had business notepads with a cool company logo — the Pied Piper with several mice running behind him. That was pretty sophisticated for the time. My father eventually ran the business until he sold it to Terminix in 1999. He's now a Quality Assurance Review consultant for Douglas Products.

What do you enjoy most?

I really enjoy training and stewardship. My BA degree is in education, and there are always new people coming into our industry to help train. Plus fumigation is all about safety to me, so I stress safety and stewardship every chance I get. Teaching sometimes includes homeowners when a fumigator asks for help in a meeting with a homeowners' association.

Other industry involvement?

I've been an instructor at the Florida School of Fumigation. I serve as the company contact person for the Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services and co-chair the Florida Fumigation Advisory Committee along with Sean Brantley of Emory Brantley & Sons Termite and Pest Control in Pinellas Park, Florida. I am an allied member of the Florida Pest Management Association, the Georgia Pest Control Association, the Georgia Peanut Commission and the Georgia Pecan Growers Association.

Changes you've seen in structural fumigation?

I'm seeing a renewed interest in my area by pest management companies wanting to make fumigation a part of their business. These are good companies that have no other option because fumigation companies have all the work they can do. I'm also seeing more fumigation for bedbugs. Bedbugs are 40+ percent of the business for one fumigation company in my area. The difficulty of killing bedbugs means more and more are turning to fumigation.

Something that might surprise people?

I was a walk-on at the University of Florida and made the team. I'm 6' 4", so I think they looked at me and said "you're a tight end." I never played a down in a game, but it was fun. I'm athletic, but more of a jack of all sports — volleyball, golf, tennis, whatever. Soccer and baseball were my favorites. I'm the catcher in a men's 45+ baseball league in Clearwater, which is kind of funny because my size makes it difficult for some umpires to see over me. Every October, I travel to Phoenix and play in the Men's Senior Baseball League World Series and have three championship rings, and every November I play with my local team in the Fall Classic in Florida and I have six Fall Classic championship rings.