

## Don't Lose Your Appetite

Jeff Dover

### In-house pest management tips

As a customer in a restaurant, is there anything worse than seeing a roach crawl across your table or a rodent scurrying around the floor? Immediately, you lose your appetite and possibly leave the establishment.

Restaurants spend a great deal of time and money eliminating pests. They can be a major problem in any well-run eatery. Pests can contaminate food supplies, cause foodborne illness and damage facilities.

The restaurant provides a dream area for pests. There is plenty of food, water and humidity and lots of hiding places. The most common pests in foodservice operations are roaches, rodents and flies. Operations must be on constant watch for these critters. Most restaurants have pest control contracts, but there is still much work to be done by unit personnel to keep pests at bay.

### Facility Survey and Actions

A complete walkthrough of the interior and exterior of each facility needs to be completed to investigate where pests are nesting and traveling. Look for evidence of hiding spots, such as skin, feces and egg cases. Specific areas where pests live and travel are entrances/ exits, dumpster areas, behind shelving in dry storage, sinks, floor drains, behind and in appliances, interior trash containers, electrical outlets or any type of wall openings, under broken floor tiles and in exterior overgrown vegetation.

All wall openings, specifically where plumbing lines exist, must be repaired, foamed and caulked to keep pests out. Ensure all doors have sweeps and are in good condition. Weather seals around windows must be present and tightly adhered. An electronic air curtain (fly fan) should be installed on the back service door. They are designed to only turn on when the door is open. This will help greatly in keeping flies from entering the facility.

### Roach Treatment

Apply roach bait in cracks or crevices where their feces are present. Be careful not to spray onto any food or food-prep surfaces. Use an effective insecticide around the entire exterior of the building, specifically around the back service doors.

### Rodent Treatment

For mice or rat issues, any wall opening may need to be professionally repaired as they can chew through most foam products. Rodents tend to gather around the dumpster area. Keep all dumpster areas clean, and ensure all lids are present and closed. If a rodent cannot find food, they will move on.

In addition, keep all vegetation trimmed and grass cut short. If rodents are seen or their feces are found in the back of the house, use snap traps. Normally, poison is not used inside facilities as rodents could ingest it and potentially die in an area that is inaccessible, creating a bad odor and attracting flies, roaches and maggots.

### Fly Treatment

Fly containment can be difficult as they can fly directly into the facility whenever doors are open. Most flies come through the back door during deliveries or when the trash is taken out. Ensure an electronic air curtain (fly fan) is installed.

Flies tend to be in areas where there is poor sanitation. Keep all dumpster areas clean, and eliminate all standing water around this area. Unchecked standing water increases the opportunity for breeding. All potential fly areas must be kept dry. Keep dumpster lids closed at all times. Sink and floor drains, loose floor tiles, and all areas under and behind equipment must be kept dry. If needed, install fly lights in the back of the house or any other areas where customers cannot see.

Restaurants with a bar area present a unique challenge with fruit flies. Proper sanitation and keeping the areas dry are the best measures. If problems persist, mix up a cup of standard bleach with a gallon of water and pour down all the floor drains. Repeated treatment may be necessary. This can also be used for the back-of-the-house floor drains.

### Professional Pest Control

Finding a reputable pest control contractor is extremely important. A partnership has to be established between the service technician and all store personnel. Best practices for sanitation should be discussed during each visit. A pest control company alone cannot eliminate all problems. Operations will need to take ownership on store cleanliness and on any facilities upgrades or repairs.

A few items to consider when negotiating a pest control contract are:

- References, including other restaurant customers
- Pests covered. Include all that are normally present in the store's geographical area (i.e., mice, rats, roaches, flies, ants, crickets, spiders)
- Clear terms on frequency of visits, preventive measures, extra treatments, emergencies, type of products used, etc.
- Time of inspections
- Timeframe for emergency response and fees
- Reports showing facilities/sanitation issues and corrective measures
- Observe kitchen and front-of-house staff for potential issues; make recommendations
- Dedicated customer service representative and service technician
- Help with any Health Department issues
- Training/education on pest management
- Clear cancellation terms
- Proper insurance coverage

In summary, the most important item for proper pest control is good sanitation methods, both inside and outside the facility. All potential breeding areas must be kept clean and dry at all times. If there is no food or moisture present, pests will not be able to survive.

### Dover and out!

Jeff Dover's facilities career started in 1985. He was employed by several major chains (Ponderosa, Steak & Ale, Bennigan's, TGI Friday's, Fuddrucker's and recently Five Guys Burgers and Fries). His technical education enabled him to take the lead as Energy Manager, Facilities Manager and Director of Facilities at the various brands.