

No Trespassing

Pest-prevention strategies are key, especially during warm or wet weather

By Marianne Wilson

For retailers, the summer heat often translates into unwanted guests: insects and rodents. Such pests, which are a major turnoff to customers, are not that easy to get rid of.

“Once an infestation has occurred, it can be difficult to eliminate,” said Ron Harrison, director of training, Orkin Training Center, Atlanta. “Prevention is by far the easiest and most cost-effective way to control pest problems.”

Pests are attracted to stores and other commercial buildings because these facilities frequently offer food, moisture, shelter and optimal pest temperatures. By removing access to these elements, retailers can make their stores uninviting to insects as well as rodents, said Harrison, an entomologist by training and an expert in pest management.

“Pests often enter stores through openings around windows and doors and around utility penetrations,” he explained. “Eliminating these unnecessary openings makes the building much less enticing.”

Here are some pest-prevention tips from Harrison:

- Make sure all windows are properly sealed, and install a No. 16 mesh screen on all windows to prevent even the smallest insects from entering;
- Examine the exterior for cracks or crevices;

- Seal all unnecessary exterior openings—no matter how small—with weather-resistant sealant or caulk. Many pests can fit through an opening as small as the width of a pencil;

- Make sure all doors are tightly sealed to prevent pests from entering under closed doors. Install or replace door sweeps if necessary; and



To discourage pests from entering a building, eliminate outside openings and make sure water drains away from the foundation.

- Work with an HVAC professional to adjust the building's airflow so that the air flows out when the door is opened, making it difficult for flying insects to enter the store.

Exterior: It's important to make sure the outside of a building does not have conditions that encourage pests to colonize.

“Analyzing vegetation, lighting, refuse disposal and outside eating areas

can help determine why pests are associating with a building,” Harrison said.

Slight modifications to landscaping, lighting and the roof can make a store less welcoming to pests, he added. Here are some suggestions:

- Trim back all vegetation at least 2 ft. from the building;

- Consider installing a 3-ft.-wide

gravel strip around the building's foundation to deter crawling pests and rodents from approaching the store;

- Use sodium-vapor lamps, instead of insect-attracting fluorescent lamps, in exterior light fixtures.

“Using fluorescent lamps in parking-lot lighting or other fixtures at least 100 ft. from a building will pull flying insects away from

the store,” Harrison added; and

- Examine the roof for signs of a bird infestation. Consider installing ledge treatments, such as spikes, to keep birds off the facility. Place netting or vinyl skirts around HVAC units to prevent birds from nesting underneath.

Year-round, Harrison said, retailers make a common mistake with regard to pest prevention in that they assume incoming goods are pest-free when, in fact, retail importers have regular pest issues. ■

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