

Contamination Control

PEST MANAGEMENT



© PHOTOGRAPHER: MARK YUILL | AGENCY: DREAMSTIME.COM

What Are Your Hot Spots?

Make your facility less attractive for pests

BY ZIA SIDDIQI, PHD, BCE

As a result of recent food recalls, the government and the American public are paying more attention to food safety. Consumers can even receive e-mail notifications of recall updates through a service offered by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration's Food Safety and Inspection Service.

Good Manufacturing Practices (GMPs) and Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Point (HACCP) programs remain the best defense against food contaminants. While GMPs include a number of efforts to eliminate potential hazards to food safety, sanitation continues to offer critical protection against impurities. Not only can effective sani-

tation remove pathogens and filth, but it can also play an integral role in the prevention of pests. Rodents, cockroaches, flies, and other pests threaten food safety by carrying a number of dangerous bacteria, such as *E. coli* and *Salmonella*, which they can introduce into food. These pests can also jeopardize food safety if they or their droppings infiltrate the supply.

As part of an Integrated Pest Management (IPM) program, sanitation efforts target and eliminate the elements in food manufacturing facilities that attract pests, including the availability of food, water, and shelter sources, as well as

breeding sites. As a result, the facility appears less attractive to pests and encourages them to look elsewhere for a home.

A good sanitation program will pay particular attention to potential pest “hot spots”: areas most conducive to pest infestation. As a general rule, most hot spots offer pests food and water, which they need for survival. In food manufacturing facilities, common hot spots include the plant floor, storage and employee areas, and waste disposal zones. Review your facility’s hot spots regularly with your pest management professional, and ensure that your sanitation program includes specific steps to target pests in these areas.

Hot Spot 1: The Plant Floor

Many facilities operate 24 hours a day, giving pests the opportunity to eat to their hearts’ content if they can access spills, food residue, and moisture on or under plant equipment. Because most facilities position equipment all around the plant, the sheer size of the plant floor can pose a challenge to sanitation efforts.

Clean spills regularly during operating hours. Most pests won’t venture unseen onto the plant floor while employees work. But if left untouched, spills can create hard-to-remove residue. Food spills can also seep into small cracks in the facility floor, providing sustenance for ants or other pests living under the foundation.

Thoroughly clean all equipment, particularly in joints and around nuts and bolts; these can easily be overlooked.

Monitor for moisture that can accumulate under machinery from leaks or condensation. Most pests do not need much water to survive. In fact, mice can glean enough moisture for survival from the food they eat. Work with a maintenance professional to complete repairs.

Use an organic cleaner in floor drains. Food debris, moisture, and warmth in drains offer an ideal breeding spot for fruit and drain flies.

Hot Spot 2: Storage Areas

In addition to providing food sources, storage areas can supply great hiding spots for pests that go under or behind shelving or near boxes.

Review your facility’s hot spots regularly with your pest management professional, and ensure that your sanitation program includes specific steps to target pests in these areas.



Inspect all shipments as they arrive, and monitor regularly for signs of damage. Rotate products on a first-in-first-out (FIFO) schedule, and immediately remove any damaged, spoiled, or infested products. If packages tear or rip, dispose of those products or seal them in containers.

Clean under and behind shelving to eliminate spilled ingredients. Store all products on wire-back shelving that is off the floor and away from the wall.

Use a high-efficiency particulate air (HEPA) filter to clean debris from cracks and crevices in walls. Vacuuming can also remove pests hiding in these areas.

Break down and remove empty boxes. Pests, including rodents and cockroaches, use cardboard boxes for harborage. Cockroaches even eat the glue that holds these boxes together.

Hot Spot 3: Employee Areas

Just as pests can arrive in shipments, they can also hitchhike inside the facility on employees’ personal belongings or uniforms; small pests can burrow inside pant cuffs and enter the facility unnoticed. Food and water in break rooms or

locker areas can sustain pests.

Ask employees to keep all food and beverages in tightly sealed containers and clean their lockers.

Regularly mop and sweep floors, and check the floor under ice or vending machines or around plumbing for leaking water.

Keep lined and tightly covered trash cans available in all employee areas. Remove waste regularly to outdoor disposal zones.

Hot Spot 4: Waste Disposal Zones

Unlike humans, pests gravitate toward odors that emanate from waste areas, which signal the presence of food. Dumpsters also offer shelter, while decaying organic matter can serve as a breeding spot for flies.

Work with a waste management company to remove all trash from the property regularly.

Don’t allow trash to sit unattended next to the building or around the dumpster. Secure all waste inside a dumpster or similar disposal device.

Position dumpsters as far from the building as possible, and rotate and clean them on a set schedule. Consider sanitizing dumpsters with an organic cleaner—similar to the one used in floor drains—to eliminate grease and grime.

Wash down the sidewalk and parking lot surrounding the facility to remove any waste or food debris.

Work with your staff and a pest management professional to incorporate these tips into a written sanitation program, and make sure that all employees understand their roles in the effort. Effective sanitation can help ensure that your product remains safe from pests and other hazards and that your facility does its part in the battle for food safety. ■

Dr. Siddiqi is Director of Quality Systems for Orkin Inc. A board-certified entomologist with more than 30 years in the industry, Dr. Siddiqi is an acknowledged leader in the field of pest management. For more information, e-mail him at zsiddiqi@rollins.com or visit www.orkincommercial.com.