

GUEST EDITORIAL

Don't Let Rodents Call for Shoppers' Attention

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As winter digs in, you can count on shoppers making the dash from their cars and into the store to avoid the chill. Though you may not

know it, rodents are doing the same thing this time or year. Because rats and mice have trouble maintaining their body temperatures, when the mercury plummets, these pests start snooping for warmer homes inside. Buildings like grocery stores, which offer food and warmer temperatures, are ideal.

Making matters worse, rodents enjoy all of the food sources that we do and many that we don't, so when scents of fresh food emanate from a store, it's like ringing the dinner bell. These "dinner guests" are covered in germs from their time spent scavenging in and around garbage dumpsters, trashcans and other clusters of decaying organic material. Among the diseases rodents pick up is Salmonella, which strikes about two million people annually in the United States. Hantavirus, a respiratory disease without a cure, is found in the rat and mouse droppings that are frequently left behind. As rodents invade, they bring bacteria and other germs inside, increasing the potential for food-borne illness.

The good news is that a few simple steps will make your store significantly less attractive to rodents. Orkin often works with its food retail customers to implement the following steps to make stores more "rodent-proof" for the long term:

INSTALL a 30-inch wide gravel strip around the exterior of your store. Rodents don't like open spaces and this type of buffer will discourage them from approaching.

MAKE SURE all cracks or other unintentional openings in your

exterior masonry wider than a dime are closed with a weather-resistant sealant. Some rats are able to squeeze through openings the size of a quarter, while mice typically can fit through a dime-sized hole.

PLACE tamper-resistant rodent bait stations around the perimeter of the establishment and in non-public areas on the interior. Focus station placements near rodent runways and potential harborage areas.

If you think you may already have a rodent problem, consider consulting a pest management professional regarding the exact course of action you should take. An expert may find that you are already taking the right steps to prevent an infestation, or could identify a potential rodent problem before it causes a bigger business problem.

FRANK MEEK is Technical Director for Orkin, Inc. As a board-certified entomologist and a 19-year industry veteran, he is an acknowledged leader in the field of pest management. Contact Frank Meek at fmeek@rollinscorp.com or call 1-800-ORKIN-NOW for a free consultation.



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