

# Targeting pest management requires good A.I.M.

*Implement an IPM program to guard your facility against pest threats*

by Patrick T. Copps, MS, BCE

When it comes to highly regulated and sensitive healthcare environments, pests are more than just a nuisance, they're a threat. Carrying disease-causing pathogens that can harm patients' health and jeopardize food safety, pests can raise concerns with health inspectors and lead to a potential lawsuit, a failed Joint Commission inspection or unwanted media coverage.

Unfortunately, controlling pests in facilities like yours can be challenging because healthcare operations provide all of a pest's basic needs – food, water, shelter and comfortable temperatures. With multiple entrances and constant foot traffic, healthcare environments can give pests opportunities to invade and multiply.

Not only is it crucial to prevent infestations, but you must be careful with the pest management techniques used around patients with weakened immune systems and other health concerns. When patients enter your facility, they expect the best care and attention possible, and your employees expect optimal working conditions. There should be no concerns about unsanitary conditions caused by disease-carrying pests or an unhealthy environment created by the materials used to control those pests.

In response to this dilemma, more and more healthcare facilities are turning to Integrated Pest Management, or IPM. The IPM approach focuses on the reasons why



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pests infest facilities like yours in the first place, stressing prevention over remediation and emphasizing non-chemical solutions. Through proactive measures, IPM reduces the need for pesticide applications and other reactive measures.

Effective IPM is a process, not a one-time event. To implement an Integrated Pest Management program at your facility, work with your

pest management professional to adopt Orkin's A.I.M. system, a collaborative and ongoing cycle of three critical activities that help keep pests in their environment and out of yours.

## Assess the situation

Your facility is unlike any other, and there are too many unique variables to provide "cookie cutter" pest management without getting to the root of the issues. As a first step, ask your pest management professional to assess the environment:

- Perform a comprehensive inspection to detect any sanitation issues or structural conditions conducive to pest infestations.
- Identify active pest issues based on evidence found in your facility.
- Evaluate risk based on your facility type, evidence of current pest activity, pest pressure in your area, and any conducive conditions found.

## Implement a customized solution

After the initial inspection and facility analysis, ask your pest management professional to work with you to develop a customized program that suits your facility's unique needs. Make sure your tailored program incorporates these components:

- Focus on prevention by implementing exclusion and other non-chemical options.
- Take an environmentally conscious approach. If a product is needed, ask your pest management professional to target the applications to do the most good with the least impact on the environment.

- Step up sanitation measures to make sure your cleaning efforts make a real impact on potential "hot spots," or areas likely to attract pests.



## Monitor, document and communicate

After each service visit, your pest management professional should document and communicate all observations and actions taken. Ask for the following documentation:

- Service report – Notes any observed pest activity and actions taken
- Inspection report – Notes any sanitation or structural conditions observed and addressed

Remember, IPM is not an overnight solution. It will take time for you and your staff to master the A.I.M. approach. Maintain an open line of communication with your pest management professional and update your provider of any changes that could affect the program. IPM encourages team cooperation, resulting in pest management success. In fact, many reputable providers offer IPM training to teach employees their roles in the pest management efforts.

The initial time and labor investment required to initiate an IPM program is well worth it. Your efforts will yield future long-term rewards in reducing pest pressure, protecting the environment and preventing damage to your company's reputation. **HPN**

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