

ASK THE EXPERTS

Industry experts answer your facility management questions.

Pest Prevention

Cooler temperatures always seem to be accompanied by a few unwelcome visitors at my facility. What maintenance strategies can I implement to reduce the threat of pest infestation during the winter months?

F. V., Springfield, Ill.



To prevent pest infiltration, identify and seal unnecessary openings in the facility's exterior wall with a water-resistant sealant.

Yes, cold weather drives pests indoors seeking food, water and shelter. In a healthcare facility, nothing can endanger a sterilized environment quite like ants, cockroaches and rodents. Roaches, for example, can carry and spread diseases and produce allergens that aggravate allergies and asthma, placing patients at risk.

The best way to stay free of pests during winter months is with an ongoing Integrated

Pest Management (IPM) program. IPM is an environmentally responsible approach to pest management that combines multiple control measures to keep pests out, versus relying on pesticides alone. By reducing reliance on chemicals and taking a broader, preventive view of pest control, IPM yields better results while reducing any negative impact other pest control methods might have on the healthcare environment.

It is essential for facility managers to understand conditions that prevent pests in healthcare environments and methods to effectively manage them. Work with a pest management professional to implement the following IPM tactics:

- **Inspection.** Regular pest management inspections are at the heart of IPM. By identifying and mitigating structural, sanitation and other conditions that promote pest infestations, healthcare facilities can dramatically reduce pest pressure and the need for chemical controls. Focus inspections on foodservice areas, loading docks, storage areas and medical waste holding rooms, as these locations often provide the excess moisture, food sources and entry points that pests need to thrive.

- **Exclusion.** Thorough inspections also will reveal any access points to the facility, including cracks and crevices. To keep pests out, seal all unnecessary openings with a water-

resistant sealant and check doors and windows to ensure they are not a prime gateway for pests.

- **Landscaping.** Plants, shrubs and trees around the facility provide harborage areas for pests. Cockroaches and rodents, in particular, use vegetation as shelter and facility access points. Consider trimming or removing vegetation at least two feet from the facility.

- **Lighting.** Fluorescent lights attract flying insects so use sodium vapor lights, which are less attractive to pests, in fixtures on or around the immediate exterior of the facility. To draw flying insects away from the entry points, mount fluorescent lights at least 100 feet from the facility.

These tips provide a starting point for keeping pests out this winter. Consult a pest management professional to effectively prevent infestations and ensure the quality and reputation of your facility is protected year-round.

ZIA SIDDIQI, PhD

Orkin Inc.

Our Expert Panel

Zia Siddiqi, PhD, BCE, Quality Assurance Director; Orkin Inc., Atlanta; E-mail: zsiddiqi@rollins.com; Internet: orkincommercial.com.