

Food Safety

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Take Birds Off the Patio Menu

Pest birds, especially pigeons, are not uncommon in foodservice settings. They can discourage customers, cause expensive property damage and threaten customer and employee health. The parasites and fungi found in bird droppings have been linked to more than 60 human diseases, including Histoplasmosis.

Birds congregate around roofs, ledges or outdoor dining patios for one of four reasons:

- ◆ to socialize with each other;
- ◆ to feed off the food and water sources available;
- ◆ to sleep on the flat surfaces of the ledge or roof; or
- ◆ to breed

The three most common techniques to keep birds from ruining your business include repellants, relocation methods and structural modifications.

Repellants. Repellants discourage birds from perching on ledges and are most effective to deter loafing or roosting birds. Though physical repellants, such as netting and bird spikes, are most common in restaurants, chemical agents or electronic noisemakers that frighten birds also can be used.

Relocation. Often relocation efforts will be necessary if birds nest at restaurants. After trapping birds, licensed professionals can physically remove them and their nests. Ethical treatment and handling of birds must be upheld at all times.

Structural Modification. Whether a restaurant currently has a bird infestation or not, mak-



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ing the building less appealing to them is always a good prevention step. Since birds are very difficult to eliminate once they nest, hinder access to common nesting sites like open areas under HVAC units. Netting will make these areas inaccessible.

The basis of any effective pest management program is sanitation. Even though it will be impossible to eliminate food and water on the patio, employees should remove food debris and waste regularly and frequently hose down the dining area. Such efforts will lessen the chance of bird and other pest infestations, giving customers the opportunity to spend an enjoyable evening dining outside. <RH

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They may be cute, but pigeons are a health hazard you don't want near your restaurant.