

WORLD GRAIN[®]

The International Business Magazine for Grain, Flour and Feed



Pest management staff training

In today's tough economic climate, grain producers, distributors and processors are looking to cut every extra expense. For many companies this means third-party staff training must be trimmed from the budget. Unfortunately, pests don't slow down with the economy – they still seek food, water, shelter and comfortable temperatures in facilities like yours. But there is good news: pest management training for your staff can come at little to no cost.

Those in the grain industry know that a pest infestation can threaten their products' safety, potentially resulting in negative media attention and possible litigation. Stored-product pests render grain inedible, while pests like roaches, rodents and flies can spread disease-causing pathogens like E. coli and Salmonella.

Fortunately, one of the easiest and most effective ways to avoid costly pest infestations is to train your staff to recognize the signs of a pest problem and teach them about pest prevention. Consider the following tips to get your staff on board with pest management efforts.

LOOKING FOR SIGNS OF PESTS

Sighting a pest presence early on will help you and your pest management professional attend to the problem before

by Zia Siddiqi, Director of Quality Systems, Orkin

Low- and no-cost tips for equipping employees with practical knowledge

irrevocable and costly damage is done. Pests are usually good about keeping out of sight, but they do leave some tell-tale signs that they've been wandering the facility. Partner with your pest management professional to educate your staff on the evidence pests leave behind.

For instance, rodents are constantly gnawing, so look for chew marks around utility openings in the facility and along base boards and door frames. You'll want to catch rodents before they can contaminate product with their urine and feces. Also, rodents have been known to cause fires after gnawing on electrical wiring. Rodents have poor eyesight so they will often travel against a wall, leaving greasy rub marks as a trail to follow. Droppings are another sign of rodent infestations. Rat droppings are about the size of a raisin while mouse droppings are the size of a rice grain.

Insects are a bit harder to track down than rodents, but your pest management professional has tools to help your employees monitor for these pests. Use glue boards and sticky traps to monitor for and trap crawling pests. Keeping an eye on the number, species and growth stage of captured pests will help you and your pest management professional identify an infestation. Install fly light units that attract flying insects with ultra-violet light. Utilize pheromone traps to attract stored-product pests like Indian meal moths – these use synthetic pheromones to draw pests to a sticky surface.

Encourage your staff to report any signs of pests to management so the problem can be addressed quickly.

PREVENTIVE MEASURES

How can you further reduce your risk for a costly pest infestation? The answer is prevention through stringent sanitation and proactive facility maintenance. By taking care of small sanitation and facility maintenance jobs, you are more likely to save on a bigger and more costly clean-up or repair down the road. A little more elbow grease today can mean preventing a costly facility shutdown if a pest infestation is found tomorrow.

Educate your staff on the roll sanitation plays in eliminating food and water sources for pests. Remind them that sanitation isn't just about keeping the plant floor clean – employee break areas and locker rooms can invite pests as well. Ask employees to clean up crumbs after breaks and never to leave dishes in the sink. Food items brought in should be stored in plastic containers with tightly fitted lids. Keep all trash receptacles lined and covered with a fitted lid as well.

Pests only need very small openings and windows of opportunity to enter your facility. Make sure employees know to close doors behind them. Also, ask them to report any openings, cracks or gaps in the facility. Cockroaches only need a 1/16th-of-an-inch gap to enter, while rats can squeeze through a hole the size of a quarter and mice a hole the



Sticky traps can efficiently and effectively trap and monitor crawling pests in non-dusty areas of the facility. Photo courtesy of Orkin.

size of a dime. Sealing these openings soon after they appear will help you keep pests out before they can threaten your plant.

TAKE ADVANTAGE OF 'FREEBIES'

Often reputable pest management providers will be happy to come in and train your staff as part of your In-

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tegrated Pest Management (IPM) program. Third-party food safety auditors, like AIB International, require this type of training. IPM focuses on preventing pest problems through sanitation and facility maintenance rather than relying on regular spray treatments. The specialists provide your staff with the know-how and tools to assist in pest management efforts at your facility – showing staff common pest “hot spots” and conditions that are conducive to pest infestations. In addition, your pest management professional can provide your staff with pest sighting memos. This process allows staff members to record pest sight-

ings and “pest-friendly” conditions. Next time your pest management professional is on site, he or she can review the memos and respond accordingly.

Check out your pest management provider's website for free educational resources. You might be surprised to learn how many free resources are available online. Your account manager is also likely to have materials that he or she can share with you. Pest management is a team effort, and your pest management provider will be grateful for your employees' support efforts in keeping pests out.

Keep your economic forecast clear by taking advantage of the resources available to you. Not only will you be helping your plant to stay in the black, but your staff will appreciate the investment in their professional development. Showing your employees you value them by instilling trust and responsibility will go a long way as you move toward sunnier economic horizons. **WG**

Dr. Zia Siddiqi is director of quality systems for Orkin, Inc. A board certified entomologist with more than 30 years in the industry, Siddiqi is a leader in the field of pest management. For more information, e-mail zsiddiqi@rollins.com. For free training resources, visit Orkin University Online at www.orkincommercial.com.

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