

The Key to **SAFEGUARDING** Your Supply Chain

With 10 simple ways to follow through

By Patrick T. Capps

In the restaurant industry, whether it's the holiday season or not, it's always important to pay special attention to providing exceptional cuisine and service to your patrons, leaving no detail untouched. Additionally, no matter the time of year, you can't let the daily behind-the-scenes operations of your restaurant fall behind. The last thing you want to do is damage your hard-earned reputation with a potentially devastating event like a food contamination scare or poor health inspection score. Who could be the culprit taking away both customers and your remaining holiday cheer? Pests.

Pests are a huge risk to restaurants year round. They can threaten food safety by contaminating inventory with the disease-causing organisms they carry, including E. coli, Salmonella and Trichinae. And an unexpected visit from the health inspector can mean poor inspection scores, or worse, a shut-down, if there's a pest sighting or infestation. However, it's not always the restaurant that is directly at fault for attracting pests like cockroaches, rodents and flies. These pests are known hitchhikers and they may arrive tucked away in shipments from your suppliers.

Contaminated inventory and disrupted daily operations caused by a supplier's infested shipment are expensive problems to have. Fortunately, monitoring your supply chain can help you spot pests before they enter your establishment and create a real problem. Follow these tips to keep any potential pests from arriving at your backdoor:



Food storage 1: Remove shipments from their original cardboard packaging and store items, such as canned goods, on shelving above the floor.



SPP in seam: Check the seams of packages for stored-product pests and signs they leave behind, such as webbing.

1 Confirm your suppliers' pest management protocols to make sure they're consistent with, or even more stringent than, your own. Similar pest prevention efforts can help minimize the chances of pests putting a kink in the supply chain.

2 Request to see suppliers' third-party audit scores to ensure they have a good track record in pest management, which encompasses a significant portion of the overall audit score. Knowing they keep their facilities in top shape will give you

peace of mind that they, too, take concerted efforts for pest prevention.

3 Open lines of communication, not only with your pest management provider, but with your suppliers. Don't be afraid to ask your suppliers questions about their pest management programs, and consider asking your pest management provider to

facilitate a meeting between all suppliers to share best practices. Becoming familiar with their practices can help ensure your restaurant stays pest free.

Your last chance to safeguard your restaurant from potential pests in supplier shipments is at the end of the supply chain – your kitchen door. Thoroughly inspect every shipment received, whether it is a food product or other restaurant supplies. If you suspect any pest-infested products, refuse to accept those shipments and immediately remove them from the restaurant premises. Other supply chain monitoring tips include:

4 Look for signs of pest activity on shipments, such as gnaw marks, droppings or live and/or dead pests. Check for damaged or leaking containers and follow up with your supplier as needed.

5 Use a black light to spot rodent urine on incoming packages.

6 Check the seams of packages for webbing from immature stored-product pests, such as Indian Meal Moths.

7 Use a pheromone badge while inspecting shipments, which can detect stored-product pests. These badges mimic real insect pheromones – chemicals involved in pest reproduction and growth – to draw out the pest. If a pest is located, immediately remove the infested inventory.

8 Remove shipments from their original cardboard cartons and store items, such as canned goods, on racks above the floor. Once inside your restaurant, pests can use boxes and other cardboard materials for shelter. Cockroaches can even feed on the glue that holds boxes together.

9 Practice First In - First Out rotation to help prevent infestations. Mark the receiving dates on all containers to aid in monitoring for signs of stored-product pests or other insects. Notify the supplier if any



Black light 1: Use a black light to inspect shipments for rodent urine, and a flashlight for signs of damage.

signs of infestation are found and discard any pest-affected products. Also, inspect nearby inventory to ensure the infestation hasn't spread.

10 Keep all perishables in sealed plastic bins. Refrigerate items if needed and check all bins daily for evidence of pests such as Vinegar Flies. Limit the quantities of fresh fruit and vegetables on hand to help maintain freshness and prevent infestations resulting from out-of-date produce.

Aligning the pest management programs of all parties in the supply chain and monitoring incoming shipments will go a long way to ensure your restaurant stays pest-free all throughout the year. Just one slip in the system – with an infested shipment or lax sanitation – may prove costly for not just your restaurant, but your suppliers, too. By working together as a team and strength-

ening the pest management programs of every entity in the supply chain, you can focus on what's most important – keeping your patrons happy and turning them into loyal customers for years to come.

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