

Shoo Fly, Don't Bother Me



It's important hoteliers work with their pest control experts to target potential pest problems before undertaking renovation projects

An expert offers tips for keeping pests away during renovations and landscaping advice for minimizing these unwanted guests

For hotels, renovations are a fact of life. Some renovation projects require serious internal and external construction work. When this happens, hoteliers run the risk of disturbing and uncovering previously-unknown pest populations.

"When perimeter work is done or landscaping is changed, animals that have adapted to that space are disrupted...You may see some activity where you didn't see it before," Ron Harrison, director of technical services, Orkin, LLC, said. "Once you disrupt their habitat, you start seeing much more movement."

Externally, rats, possums, raccoons, and other rodents may begin

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sneaking into the garbage or otherwise make their presence known. Internally, wasps, beetles, flies, and other insects may be harboring in attics or behind walls.

Harrison said one hotel client decided to fix a long-running leak issue as part of a larger renovation project. While working on the leak problem, workers discovered a large fly population that, once disturbed, quickly spread throughout the entire hotel.

"We really encourage a strong preventive inspection. Try to reduce

populations before the construction starts through trapping or baiting programs," he said.

While performing renovations, Harrison recommended hoteliers take measures to prevent future pest population invasions. These include sealing windows, entrance ways and utility penetrations properly.

"Contractors come in and do a good job, but they may not be conscious of openings or new utility penetrations that might have insects or other pests," Harrison said. "Before everything is closed up, put products down that can be helpful."

Hoteliers can also strategically place guards around the exterior

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to keep birds from roosting and position external lighting in a way that keeps insects away from the building.

"It's very easy to install these [measures] while construction is happening," he said. "It's very inexpensive while renovations are happening but much more costly after the fact."

Depending on the pest and the area, Harrison said renovations would be much better during a season where the pest is more comfortable on the outside of the building. For example, in the fall, rodents begin seeking shelter indoors from the coming cold winter elements.

Disturbing their external habitat during this time may give them even more incentive to check into a hotel.

Obviously, the way to keep these problems to a minimum is to have in place a solid pest control program. Harrison recommended hoteliers contact their service providers before undertaking renovations so experts can assess the entire property, identify any potential problems and set baits and traps accordingly.

Landscaping

Flowers, trees and other vegetation are great tools to help hotels increase their curb appeal. However, pests use this vegetation for

feeding, nesting and transportation. Hotels must be careful about which type of vegetation they choose and where they place it.

"Some vegetation is very attractive to animals, especially that which produces fruit," Harrison said. "This includes wasps looking for nests and rodents feeding on it."

Harrison cautioned against planting grass or laying mulch too close to entrance ways. He recommended using cedar mulch, which repels pests, and keeping grass levels at an acceptable level.

"The more grass you have, the more insects you'll have," Harrison said. "On the other hand, cutting the grass really low isn't that good for the grass. Find that happy medium to keep away the heavy thatch."

Harrison also recommended hotels keep shrubs, leaves and tree limbs away from entrance ways and keep a two-foot barrier of bare dirt next to the building exterior. ■

Pest control experts can set baits and traps around the hotel exterior to keep pests outside and away from the property

