

The Importance of Pest Control in Food Facilities



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Like so many other areas of food safety, when it comes to pest control, focusing on prevention is absolutely key. Whether on the production floor or at the retail level, proper pest prevention and management is an essential part of any food safety plan. Pest control can be managed internally by a company or can be done via a third party contract.

Whichever way you go, your ability to think proactively is key to preventing foodborne illness concerns related to pests. This means understanding conditions in your facility where pests can thrive, auditing your facility for weaknesses, training your employees what to look for, and being actively engaged in both vigilance and record keeping. It's important too, to acknowledge that a one size fits all does not work, as geographical location, weather, the production environment, and seasonal changes can vary the threats that are most prevalent for your facility.

Consider, for example, the myriad of ways pests can get into a facility and why they stay. Any openings in walls, floors, windows, roofs, etc. are all potential entry points. Poor sanitation procedures can also be a cause of infestation, as well as incoming pallets, boxes, and other materials. Once pests have finagled their way into your operation, they hang around for things like: food, shelter, moisture, warmth, and other various needs.

With all of these factors in mind, it can feel a bit overwhelming to figure out how to take on pest control most effectively for your operation. However, you are not alone! There are plenty of great resources out there. Here is an action plan for example that can get you thinking about pest control proactively:

- Start with the outside perimeter of your property and look for any openings or penetrations.

Clear out any perimeter debris, pallets, old equipment, old pipes...items that could provide harborage to pests.

-Engage a professional pest control company familiar with food manufacturing to set bait traps on the perimeter and inside. Have them return on a regular and as needed basis. Have them do a thorough inspection inside and out and follow their advice. They may recommend installing fly elimination lights, powders in crevices, traps, sprays, etc.

-Clean, Clean, Clean....open up panels of equipment, pull dipping cabinets away from the wall, clean underneath refrigerators, clean drains with dedicated brushes, replace old gaskets and seals.

-Keep the facility as dry as possible.

-Store ingredients and boxes off the floor on racks and leave space to regularly clean behind and underneath all storage areas.

-Clean up all spills, right away.

-Install self-closing devices for doors to minimize openings.

-Frequently change mop heads.

-Dispose of cleaning rags after single use.

-Do not have open food containers.

-Inspect inbound trucks, boxes and pallets for cleanliness and possible infestation.

The following free sources also offer great insight into Pest Control in food industry environments. Be sure to consult with your local inspector, regulatory agency, etc. as well to help figure out the best program/fit for your facility.

[Food Manufacturing, Processing and Storage Pest Control](#) – University of Arkansas
[A Pest Control Program](#) – Purdue University