

## Integrated Pest Management in Food Service Establishments

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Food Service establishments typically dread the thought of pests, as well they should. Not only can pests give you low scores on inspections, they can cost you money on contaminated foods that have to be thrown away and can drive customers right out the doors. It is easy to see why pest management is a part of almost any food service establishment, but is it the right kind of pest management? It is becoming more and more clear that the most effective, healthiest and, in the long run, cheapest method of controlling pests is with the use of Integrated Pest Management.

What is Integrated Pest Management (IPM)? It is the use of **Integrated** techniques, such as exclusion, sanitation and baiting to control **Pests**, anything you don't want inside your food establishment, utilizing **Management** tools, such as reports on pest location, pest type, needed repairs and processes that get action when action is needed. It is utilizing the least toxic methods that will get the job done (There is no sense in poisoning ourselves when we're trying to poison something else, is there?). It is knowing your pest so you can fight it by using its own habits and behaviors against it.

Food Service establishments attract pests. Food, water and shelter, the three things any pest needs to survive, are all present. Traditionally, cockroaches, for example, are treated by a "crack and crevice" type of application monthly. This is where the exterminator sprays any suspicious looking areas with a pesticide to kill the cockroaches. Since cockroaches like to hide in narrow areas that touch their bodies both above and below, special attention is paid to cracks in the wall, gaps between shelving, etc., hence the name "crack and crevice".

Unfortunately, the spray doesn't just go into cracks and crevices. It can spread and cover food, food contact surfaces and other areas. In addition, this type of treatment is only getting the cockroaches near the surface, not those that have hidden down deep. Flushing agents within the spray can cause the cockroaches to spread to previously uninfected areas. Additionally, spraying does not kill the egg cases that female cockroaches carry. When those eggs hatch, the baby cockroaches eat anything that they can get, grow, reproduce and the cycle begins all over again. You might say that just spraying is like farming cockroaches. You spray (harvesting) the cockroaches, emptying out the environment, which leaves plenty of room and food to let all the cockroaches you didn't kill thrive. And the cycle starts up again.

But let's say you wanted to begin an IPM program. You might start by consulting with your pest management professional (aka PMP, formerly "the exterminator") and doing a thorough cleaning. This helps remove food sources for the cockroaches, removes the dead cockroaches and egg cases (also a food, and an allergen, source) and removes roach feces and body parts ("frass", which looks a little like pepper sprinkled around cracks and crevices, also a food source, particularly for baby cockroaches and an allergen as well). Cracks and crevices would then be sealed up, preventing shelter for the cockroaches. Your PMP might want to monitor for current or further infestations by placing sticky traps out in likely areas of infestation. The PMP might also place bait out for the cockroaches.

Bait works very well in cockroach infestations because baits don't disperse by themselves like sprays do. The cockroaches actually do part of your job for you by eating the baits and then carrying them back to where the other cockroaches have gathered. When they defecate, the feces are poisonous, and the baby cockroaches will eat them and die as well.

One major concern with baits is that they can be contaminated by both sprays and nicotine, so it is very important not to use any sprays around them. Keep all unauthorized pesticides out of your establishments.

There are other steps involved that need to be discussed with your PMP. In addition, what works with cockroaches does not necessarily work with other pests, and vice versa. Each situation is different, which is why we call this pest management. It involves knowledge, effort and time. But it has been shown to be extremely effective, and can make your establishment healthier for you, your employees and your patrons.

For further information, please feel free to contact Michael Swoyer, Supervisor of Rat Control, at the City of Kansas City, Mo., Health Department, at (816)513-6010 or [michael\\_swoyer@kcmo.org](mailto:michael_swoyer@kcmo.org).