

# Pest Infestations: the consequences and managing the risk



**Richard Moseley, Technical Manager for the British Pest Control Association (BPCA) highlights the risks that can affect your business, and steps you can take to protect your livelihood from pests.**

## Reputation

Reputations can be ruined and businesses destroyed if pest activity is allowed to develop in sites and businesses. Media and social networking sites rapidly pick up on and report about pest infestations, throwing organisations into the media limelight without always considering the facts.

Turnover and occupancy in hospitality-related businesses can be seriously damaged by adverse publicity, significantly reducing operating profits. Always remember that pests and pest activity is of general interest to many members of the public, and media coverage can be sudden and intense.

## Legislation

If it is your site or business, it is probably your responsibility to deal with the control and eradication of pests. If you do not control pest activity at your sites, you can be forced to control rodent pests by local authorities under the terms of The Prevention of Damage by Pests Act 1949.

Local authorities can also deal with insect infestations under the terms of the Public Health Act 1936/1961, and where infested or contaminated food is served by eating establishments, prosecution is possible under the Food Safety Act 1990.

## Disease

There is an associated health risk with many pests, and those that spread diseases are termed 'Public Health' pests. As well as rats and mice other pests such as common house flies carry a number of pathogens (germs), as do cockroaches. The damage done to a reputation from a customer's ill health, or possibly even death, is immeasurable.

## Damage

Not only can pests damage foodstuffs and stored goods, they can also damage the fabric and fixtures of building. Rodents are especially problematic in this respect, as their incisor teeth grow throughout their life, and they must gnaw to wear them down. Items that can typically be gnawed are electrical wiring and water tanks, leading to fires, flooding and the risk of electrocution. Insurers may be less than willing to pay out compensation for damage done by uncontrolled infestations.

## Risk Management

Know your limitations. Pests are incredibly difficult to deal with, and with some species such as bed bugs, rodents and

cockroaches; require skill and training that have been learned and perfected over many years of treatments by professional pest controllers. If you are faced with an infestation that is beyond your control, bring in a professional who has been suitably trained and has access to the professional products required to manage infestations.



programme; always ensure that you use a reputable contractor. Reputable contractors will be qualified and have the appropriate insurance to allow them to work safely on your premises.

### Be Proactive

It is always better to be proactive and prevent an infestation before it becomes a major issue. The best way to do this is to invest in a routine pest control contract with a suitably insured and qualified company. A regular inspection by a pest control professional could literally be worth its weight in gold. But be warned, ignoring the advice of a professional pest controller would not be appreciated by an Environmental Health Officer if they are alerted by a customer complaint.

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The British Pest Control Association recommends that you employ the services of a BPCA

member, as

you can be assured that a BPCA member is suitably qualified, suitably insured, and that they are visited and assessed by a BPCA staff representative on a regular basis.



### Use a Professional

Always use a reputable professional – whether it’s for a one-off infestation (such as wasps) or a proactive pest prevention



If you are searching for a professional pest controller, then look no further!



**BPCA.org.uk**