Spring 2026

Minnesota Pest Management Association

MPMA

Where Successful Cockroach Treatments Begin

By Dr. Tim Husen, BCE, PHE, PCQI
Technical Services Manager, Syngenta Professional Pest Management

No two cockroach control jobs are ever the same. Cockroaches not only constantly adapt to their environment, but their behavior also varies constantly. If you want happy customers, you must inspect and assess each job on a case-by-case basis.

Always note the foraging behaviors of the cockroach population you're dealing with. How many harborages do you see? How many potential food resources? Are the cockroaches stressed? You may think you can simply apply a bait and be done with it, but truly how big is the population? Have you put out enough product to get the results you want?

Not every cockroach will leave its harborage to access the bait. Adult males and large nymphs will, but smaller roaches and even females (mated) sometimes don't. You may end up missing those cockroaches, especially the females (and they're the most important ones to manage).

In my training presentations, I show a photo of a very small commercial kitchen, with one grill cook line and a plating line behind it. It couldn't be wider than ten feet and yet there are tens of thousands of potential aggregation/harborage sites in that picture. Work in zones and inspect as many of them as you can.

Big cockroach populations aren't limited to commercial accounts. Some of the worst infestations I've seen personally have been in single family homes. In either case, the starting point of your strategy must be inspecting for and assessing the population.

Post inspection, customer communication is critical for cockroach management. You want them to be on board with your treatment strategy. For residential customers, be empathetic. It's their home. But be prepared for challenges.

In multi-unit housing, for instance, you may encounter residents who are accustomed to living with cockroaches. They may not change behaviors that are leading to infestations in the first place. You could have a case in which a neighbor's unit is the nexus of the infestation, and he or she simply won't let you inside to assess the situation. That can be extremely challenging.

Generally, commercial accounts are more agreeable. If we're talking food prep, it's generally much easier to get buy-in because cockroaches are vermin. Cockroaches will shut down their business if you don't help them get the problem under control.

Only after you assess the specific infestation can you employ the right products in the right places to ensure that your customers will be happy with the job you've done.

For information on Syngenta's full line of cockroach treatments visit syngentapmp.com or contact Mike Weissman, at mike.weissman@syngenta.com.

Inside This Issue

Nate Heider

Spring in Minnesota

What It Means for All of Us in Pest Management

As we finally start to thaw out here in Minnesota, spring always brings a sense of relief—longer days, warmer weather, and a chance to get back into a rhythm after a long winter. For those of us in pest management, though, we all know what it really means… things are about to get busy.

Every year, as soon as that snow melts and soil temperatures start to rise, we see the same pattern. Pests that have been tucked away all winter start moving. They're looking for food, water, and a place to settle in—and unfortunately, that often leads them right into our customers' homes and businesses.

Ant activity is usually one of the first things we start hearing about. Carpenter ants, especially, start showing up as they begin foraging. A homeowner might see a few ants and think it's no big deal, but we know better. Early activity can mean there's something bigger going on behind the scenes.

Rodents are another big one this time of year. The mice that spent the winter inside don't just disappear overnight. As things warm up, they start moving between the inside and outside, which makes spring a really important time for monitoring and tightening up exclusion work.

Then you've got overwintering pests—boxelder bugs, Asian lady beetles, cluster flies—all starting to show up again inside homes as temperatures rise. It can be frustrating for customers who thought they were done dealing with them once winter hit. And of course, we start seeing wasp and hornet queens getting established early, which is the best time to get ahead of those issues before nests get out of control.

On top of that, wildlife activity doesn't slow down much either. Squirrels and other animals are still very active, especially with breeding season, and attics continue to be a common problem area.

The thing is, while all of this is second nature to us, it's not always obvious to our customers. That's where we really have an opportunity this time of year. Spring is the perfect time to shift the conversation from reacting to problems to actually preventing them.

When we're out on those early services, it's a chance to highlight entry points, talk through what to expect in the coming months, and set customers up with a plan that makes sense long term. A solid spring service can make a huge difference—not just in reducing callbacks, but in building trust and keeping customers with us year after year.

Communication plays a big role too. Taking a few extra minutes to explain what's going on and what we're doing about it goes a long way. It helps customers understand that pest control isn't a one-time fix—it's a process. When they understand that, everything gets easier.

As members of the Minnesota Pest Management Association, this is also a time when our professionalism really shows. Spring is when we're the most visible, and it's a chance to set the standard—not just for our own companies, but for the industry as a whole here in Minnesota.

Whether it's helping train new technicians, fine-tuning our service approach, or just supporting each other, this season pushes all of us to be better.

Spring always feels like a reset. It's a chance to build momentum and set the tone for the rest of the year. If we take advantage of it—focus on doing the job right, communicating well, and staying consistent—it sets us up for a strong season ahead.

I appreciate everything you all do every day. This industry is built on hard work and it shows, especially this time of year.

Wishing you all a safe, busy, and successful spring.

Mastering Moisture-Related Pests

By Caroline Kohnert, Technical Director and Staff Entomologist, Plunkett's Pest Control

As pest management professionals, we often deal with pests that are a direct result of human activity—improper sanitation, neglected food storage, or structural deficiencies. However, some of the most persistent and challenging infestations stem from a more fundamental problem: moisture. Of course, all pests need some level of moisture to survive. However, there are a variety of pests that thrive in damp environments, signaling a hidden moisture problem and causing significant frustration for clients.

The most common moisture-related pests I've encountered are psocids, springtails, and fungus beetles. However, there are many more. Understanding the biology, habits, and control strategies for moisture-related pests is crucial for effective long-term management.

Psocids: The Booklice

Psocids, often called booklice, are tiny insects, typically measuring between 1 and 6 mm. They are soft-bodied and appear in a variety of colors. Despite their common name, they aren't true lice and don't bite people or pets. They get the "booklice" moniker because they are often found on moldy books in humid environments, feeding on the fungi and starches in the bindings. Psocids are highly sensitive to changes in humidity, thriving in environments with relative humidity levels above 65%. Their presence is a strong indicator of a current or past moisture issue.

Identification: Psocids are small, pale, and can be confused with termites due to their appearance. Look for their characteristic chewing mouthparts and lack of wings in most indoor species.

Habitats: In homes, these pests are found in damp, poorly ventilated areas like basements, crawl spaces, and wall voids. They may also be found around window frames, under building siding, around plumbing leaks and sweating pipes, and in other areas where mold or mildew is present. In food processing facilities, they are often found in poorly kept grain bins, food processing areas with spillage, and on paper packaging within humid warehousing areas.

Springtails: The Jumping Nuisance

Springtails are another group of tiny, wingless insects, typically about 1.5 mm long. Their claim to fame is a forked, tail-like appendage called a furcula, tucked under their abdomen. When disturbed, they release this appendage, catapulting themselves into the air and away from danger. This jumping behavior often leads them to be mistaken for fleas. However, unlike fleas, springtails don't bite and are harmless to humans and pets.

Identification: Their small size, wingless body, and characteristic jumping motion are key identifiers. Their color can vary from whitish to bluish to dark gray or black.

Habitats: Springtails require extremely high humidity and are most often found in wet soil, leaf litter, and under decaying wood. They can enter homes through window screens, doors, or vents when their outdoor environment becomes too dry. Inside, they're drawn to moisture sources like sinks, bathtubs, floor drains, damp basements, and the soil of over-watered houseplants.

Fungus Beetles: The Mold Munchers

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The term "fungus beetle" refers to a large family of tiny beetles (*Latridiidae*). Many species are also known as "plaster beetles" or "mold beetles" because their presence is a telltale sign of dampness and fungal growth. Two common species include the minute brown scavenger beetle and the foreign grain beetle.

Measuring about 1.2 to 2.4 mm, these reddish-brown to brown beetles are scavengers that feed primarily on the hyphae and spores of molds and fungi. They are often found in new homes where damp building materials like wet lumber or sheetrock have fostered mold growth.

Identification: These beetles are small, elongate-oval, and typically brown. Under magnification, their wing covers (elytra) often have distinctive rows of pits. Their head and thorax are narrower than their abdomen, giving them a pear-shaped appearance.

Habitats: Fungus beetles thrive in humid environments with a fungal food source. You'll find them in damp basements, crawl spaces, attics with roof leaks, HVAC systems with leaks, and around plumbing fixtures. They are also attracted to moldy stored products and can infest locations like leaky bath traps and wet insulation from sweating pipes.

IPM for Moisture-Related Pests

Effective control for these pests is rarely achieved with insecticides alone and managing client expectations is especially important. The cornerstone of a successful strategy is a robust Integrated Pest Management plan that focuses on identifying and eliminating the root cause: moisture.

Inspection and Source Elimination

The first and most critical step is a thorough inspection to locate all potential moisture sources. This is where your expertise shines. Check storage areas, basements, and crawl spaces for standing water, leaks, or excessive humidity. Inspect plumbing, including under sinks and behind appliances and machinery, for leaks or condensation. Look for signs of roof or wall leaks, examine HVAC systems, and ensure gutters and downspouts are properly draining water away from the foundation. In homes, you should also examine the building siding and the underside of deck planks for damp wood. New construction may also contain damp wood or plaster that harbors mold.

Environmental Modification

Once the moisture source is identified and repaired, the next step is to dry out the environment. This is the single most important action for long-term control. Use dehumidifiers to reduce relative humidity to below 50%. Proper ventilation is key—ensure crawlspace vents are open in warm weather and that air is circulating in all damp areas. In cases of significant mold growth, recommend a professional remediation service.

Physical and Chemical Control

While environmental modification is the long-term solution, these pests often require immediate action to manage existing populations.

- **Vacuuming:** For large, visible infestations of psocids, springtails, or beetles, a HEPA-filter vacuum is an excellent tool for immediate reduction.
- **Exclusion:** Seal cracks and crevices in foundations, around windows, and under doors to prevent pests from entering the structure from outdoor breeding sites. Make sure window and door screens are intact.
- **Insect Light Traps:** ILTs placed in false ceilings and other affected areas can be very effective monitors for fungus beetles. Unfortunately, this is ineffective for psocids and springtails.
- **Pesticide Application:** Insecticides may be used as a supplementary measure, but only after moisture issues have been addressed. Consider a residual product to treat known harborage areas and entry points. It's vital to explain to clients that chemicals will not solve the problem without addressing the underlying moisture. Without fixing the moisture issue, the pests will simply return.

By educating clients on the link between moisture and these "nuisance" pests, and by implementing a comprehensive IPM strategy, you can not only eliminate the infestation but also solve the underlying problem, solidifying your reputation as a professional who provides lasting solutions.

Caroline Kohnert is the technical director and staff entomologist at Plunkett's Pest Control. She is an Associate Certified Entomologist and member of the Urban Pest Management Technical Committee. She has a master's degree in Adult Education from the University of Minnesota and is pursuing a master's degree in Entomology at the University of Kentucky.

How to Go Green in Mosquito Control

By Anne Nagro, PCT Online Contributor

Customer cooperation is a recurring aggravation when it comes to mosquito control. To successfully reduce populations of these insects, pest management professionals need clients to help them eliminate breeding sites.

That's a job just more than half—56 percent—of customers willingly undertake, reported PMPs in the 2023 PCT State of the Mosquito Control Market study. The study was sponsored by MGK and compiled by Readex Research, an independent research firm, in February 2023. It involves regularly dumping out water-filled vessels like baby pools, bird baths, tarps and potted plant saucers where mosquitoes lay their eggs. It also can involve cleaning gutters and regrading low areas of the yard, so water doesn't pool.

"If you can educate your client to help you with the source-water reduction, it will improve your results tremendously," said Todd Barber, president of Barber's Best Termite & Pest in Tallahassee, FL.

Fixing conducive conditions is a basic principle of integrated pest management, and it is even more important when using natural and botanical products to control mosquitoes. That's because green products break down faster in the environment and have lower residual activity. Eliminating breeding sites helps green products deliver a more effective and satisfactory service.

"In the Tallahassee area, we have a lot of environmentally conscious people, so we have had requests for an all-green option for mosquito suppression," said Barber.

His green mosquito control service involves the application of essential oils. "Obviously, you don't get the same residual control with that application, but the clients seem pleased with it," he said. He also applies larvicide and an insect growth regulator to properties as needed. Customers can add mosquito traps to the program for an additional charge.

Interestingly, the customers who want green mosquito service often are more cooperative. "They are more apt to take an active role in the program rather than people who just want you to make the mosquitoes go away," said Barber.

Such behavior does not surprise Susannah Enkema, vice president of research and insights at Shelton Group, which specializes in sustainability marketing. The company's proprietary research shows that green-minded consumers actively undertake activities to support sustainability efforts. "They care a lot about this," she said.

Shelton Group's Eco Pulse survey has tracked consumer perceptions, behaviors and expectations of corporate sustainability and responsibility over the past thirteen years. The 2022 online survey of 2,008 U.S. respondents has a margin of error of plus/minus 2.2 percent. It found that about 58 percent of consumers believe in sustainability and 34 percent actively engage in activities to support this cause. One of the activities, reported by 11 percent of consumers in the survey, was using natural or organic pest control alternatives.

Unfortunately, the people who are the hardest to engage in mosquito control often are the ones with the biggest mosquito-breeding problems. And most frustrating for customers, that's often the neighbor with the dirty swimming pool.

These neighbors usually could care less about mosquitoes and their backyard environment. "We can try to sell to the neighbor next door, but a lot of times, if they're not going to take care of their

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pool, they're not going to take care of their yard at all," said Crystal Rizzo, owner and operatorof Crystal Pest Control in Henderson, NC.

Sustainable Messaging

According to the Shelton Group survey, most Americans—70 percent—felt moderately to very strongly that it is their individual responsibility to change their daily choices to positively impact the environment.

That said, "We kind of put a little more pressure on companies" to do so, said Enkema. "About 85 percent of us say that companies really have to play a role in this," she explained.

It is most effective, then, to emphasize how both company and customers can work together to advance sustainability, she said.

In addition, explain how green service reduces the use of chemicals of concern in the home environment. Consumers are "more likely to care about chemicals of concern than anything else. I think that's what really speaks to the average American," said Enkema. Removing chemicals of concern from products was the number one factor positively impacting purchase decisions across categories for buyers of natural or pest control alternatives, and it was a top-five factor influencing the purchase decisions of all consumers, found the 2022 Shelton Group survey.

How Consumers Feel About Sustainability

Shelton Group's 2022 Eco Pulse survey segments consumers into four groups: Actives, Seekers, Skeptics and Indifferents.

The Actives group accounts for 34 percent of consumers. They are invested in sustainability and are two- to three-times more likely to engage in activities to support this cause, such as by buying organic food and natural cleaning products, using natural fertilizers and installing native landscape plants. "For us, a green consumer is typically an Active," said Enkema.

Seekers, 24 percent of consumers, typically share the same beliefs as Actives, but not all of the same behaviors. "They want a partner in this. They want to know that the companies they buy from are doing the right thing, too," said Enkema. Most Seekers also are in a specific life stage. "They're more likely to be in that time of life where they have a household of children," she said.

Skeptics don't believe every-thing related to sustainability. They have doubts about sustainability for various reasons. This group accounted for 30 percent of consumers. Indifferents are not engaged or involved; sustainability really doesn't matter to them. They made up 12 percent of consumers.

Overall, consumers are getting smarter about sustainable products and services. "What we see across our data year over year is that the number of Americans who are paying attention to sustainability is growing, their level of sophistication is growing, and I do think that it's important for a company to talk in a way that brings everybody along," said Enkema.

Public Health Factors

Although most PMPs say customers sign up for mosquito control service to reduce nuisance bites, some do so for health reasons.

According to the 2023 PCT State of the Mosquito Control Market survey, 50 percent of PMPs believe their customers understand the risks of vector-borne diseases and 58 percent said mosquitoes represent a greater threat to public health today than they did five years ago.

"Whenever something pops up on the news about West Nile or any of these viruses that can be transmitted by mosquitoes, we do see a small surge in calls for that service because they want to make sure it's nowhere near their pets or them when they're outside," said David Madurski, owner of Madurski Termite & Pest Exterminating in Florence, SC. These customers are motivated to reduce mosquito populations on their property.

It's not uncommon to notice on a second service call that issues cited during the inspection, like clogged gutters, have been fixed, explained Madurski.

Like 41 percent of fellow PMPs, Rizzo knows people who have been sickened by vector-borne disease. She said it is important to talk to customers about mosquito-borne disease, "because it can be serious," as well as to calm the fears of overly concerned customers. "Some of them have never heard of it, and of course others are so paranoid," she said.

Pest control companies provide an essential public health service by performing mosquito control. That said, companies should never promise that a program will prevent mosquito-borne illness and the service contract should clearly indicate this, warned PMPs.

Reprinted with permission. This article originally appeared in the print edition of PCT under the headline "Green Goals."

Is That Blacklegged Tick Male or Female? A New DNA Test Can Tell You

By Ed Ricciuti

In the case of ticks, the classic trope derived from a Kipling poem holds very true, since the female of the species is unquestionably deadlier than the male. Adult male ticks do not feed—they just mate and that's it for them—while females latch on to hosts, feed on blood, and potentially spread disease. So do the larvae and nymphs, known together as "immatures."

Knowing the sex of ticks is important to understanding their biology and controlling them. In the case of blacklegged ticks (*Ixodes scapularis*), it's not that hard to identify the sex of adults because of sexual dimorphism, such as overt differences in genital openings. But those traits in immatures are arcane and not always reliable indicators.

A recent breakthrough published in October in the *Journal of Medical Entomology*, however, makes it possible to figure out the sex of immatures at a molecular level and promises to open doors to great understanding of tick biology.

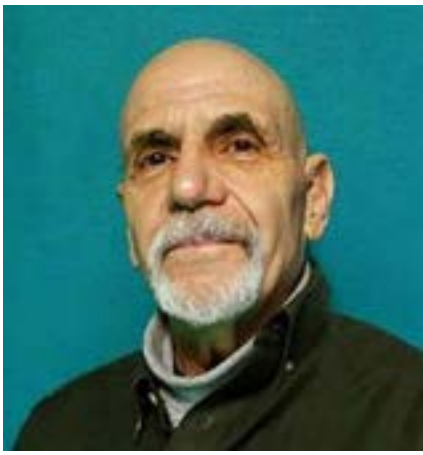
"Male and female nymphs also overlap in their body size, and given their small size, this makes identifying them morphologically nearly impossible," says Cody Koloski, a Ph.D. candidate in the Department of Veterinary Microbiology at the University of Saskatchewan, Canada, and lead author on the new study.

Koloski and his colleagues assayed immatures with a DNA test recently developed by Isobel Ronai, Ph.D., of Harvard University and colleagues to distinguish between adult female and male blacklegged ticks. Ronai's team published the test protocol in May 2025 in the *Journal of Medical Entomology*. Both advances offer researchers a new tool to study the species, the main vector of Lyme disease and capable of spreading a half-dozen other ailments as well.

Koloski's main research focus has been on how the immune system of mice that are hosts to the blacklegged tick affects the transmission and abundance of the Lyme disease bacteria, *Borrelia burgdorferi*, in ticks. He has found that female blacklegged nymphs acquire a higher infection rate than males.
When he read Ronai's paper, Koloski says, "I immediately realized that I needed to see if their method could work on larvae and nymphs."

The newly found ability to identify the sex of blacklegged ticks relies on a highly efficient method of DNA sequencing called a polymerase chain reaction. It can simultaneously detect two different DNA sequences in a single reaction, boosting speed of the research. One of the sequences targeted was specific to males.

The paper describes how DNA was extracted from the nymph leg and then



sequenced. Nymphs were then allowed to mature into adults as a double-check on sex determination.

Until now, determining sex of immature ticks has required sensitive equipment operated by highly trained experts. Even then, results of testing have not always been reliable. Validation of a molecular tool to distinguish sex of immatures "could significantly benefit studies in tick-borne pathogen ecology," Koloski's team writes.

They raised hopes that the new test capability will facilitate future research into how sex impacts key traits of the blacklegged tick, including the intake of blood, how they seek out hosts, and survivability. They also noted

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Blacklegged Tick DNA Test, cont.

that increased understanding of tick biology could lead to better control methods.

Increasingly, scientists who study ticks have anticipated that research on the genetics of ticks could lead to genetic control methods that have been aimed at other arthropod pests. A likely candidate is the sterile insect technique (SIT), in which sterile males are released in the wild to mate with females, which then fail to produce offspring. It has had success against several species, notably *Aedes* mosquitoes.

Males can be sterilized for SIT by radiation, the time-tested method, or genetic modification, which is the subject of research by the University of Nevada's Monika Gulia-Nuss, Ph.D. Koloski was working at her laboratory when he initiated the test on immatures. The new DNA test, says Gulia-Nuss, "provides efficient methods to separate males from females, a necessary step for population suppression strategies like the sterile males release either using traditional radiation method or the genetic modification."

The blacklegged tick is endemic to much of the nation's northeast, west, and southeastern regions and is spreading. As it does, so does the incidence of infection by the Lyme disease spirochete, which it transmits. Among the other disease pathogens it spreads are those of babesiosis and ehrlichiosis.

Diseases transmitted by ticks now account for more than 80% of all cases of vector-borne illnesses reported annually. Almost a half million people contract Lyme disease annually in the United States, making the blacklegged tick a major health concern.

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Business Development

Industry Leaders Share Top Pest Control Work Priorities for 2026

As we look toward the future, the pest management industry remains a landscape of diverse goals and evolving strategies. Whether the focus is on global humanitarian efforts, local business efficiency, or the integration of emerging technologies, every leader has a different "north star" guiding their professional efforts.

In late 2025, *PMP* asked industry veterans and experts to share their primary work priorities as they prepared to undertake the challenges and opportunities of 2026.

Key takeaways

Operational refinement: Leaders are looking to simplify internal processes and cut services that don't fit their business models.

Technological integration: Exploring the practical applications of artificial intelligence (AI) and expanding online training platforms are high on the digital agenda.

Growth and people: Maintaining a dual focus on expansion into new markets while prioritizing employee care and community giving remains a core pillar for established firms.

Global missions and digital education

For some leaders, 2026 is defined by a commitment to education and humanitarianism on a massive scale.

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Dan Baldwin, BCE, REHS/RS, CCFS, CP-FS, PCQI, VP of Hawx Pest Control: "I want to solve the food insecurity problem for smallholder farmers in sub-Saharan Africa."

Dr. Faith Oi, Extension Associate Professor, Urban Entomology, U of FL: "I plan to provide programs to as many pest management professionals as possible, update pest identification guides, and offer more Pest Management University (PMU) online!"

Scaling sales and market expansion

Maintaining momentum requires a balance between entering new territories and reinforcing the foundation of the company—the people.

Jerry Schappert, ACE, Owner of The Bug Doctor: "I want to slow down on active field work and concentrate on sales and tightening up the business."

Eric Scherzinger, Vice President of Procurement and Marketing, Scherzinger Pest Control: "We will continue to keep our focus on growing our company, especially in our expansion markets—as well as to continue to take care of our people and give back to the community."

Refining the business model for efficiency

Efficiency isn't just about the bottom line; it's about the mental health of the workforce. These leaders are looking to simplify their operations to create a more sustainable work environment.

Doug Foster, Owner of Burt's Pest Control: "We are revisiting and simplifying processes in the office and in the field. That means we're cutting services that don't fit our business model or that we're simply not great at. We're also taking a second look at some unprofitable and difficult customers. We want to make life simpler and less stressful for staff and technicians."

Mark Sheperdigian, BCE, VP of Technical Service, Rose Pest Solutions: "We want to improve our ability to change. This means recognizing where we should change, choosing the correct new direction, and implementing change so it is systemic and permanent without ruffling our workforce."

Preparing for the spring hiring rush

Growth requires more than just more bodies in trucks; it requires a structured approach to culture and staffing needs.

Pete Schopen, Owner of RV There Yet Pest Consulting: "I plan to help my pest control firm clients prepare for spring hiring. Do they have written core values in place to set expectations for their new hires? Do they have interview questions ready? Have they even gauged whether they have enough recurring work to justify hiring a new employee? What is their biggest need: technician, office staff or both?"

The digital frontier: AI and efficiency

As technology moves faster than ever, PMPs are looking for ways to stay ahead of the curve through automation and quick access to data.

Desiree Straubinger, BCE, CP-FS, Technical Service Representative, BASF: "I want to continue investigating the ways artificial intelligence can support my role, enabling me to complete tasks more efficiently and access information quickly."

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Ladder Safety Resources Available

They're too big to fit in a toolbox, but ladders are still among the most common tools used by any tradesman. And, just like other tools, the safe usage of ladders is paramount to a successful day at a work—and returning home at the end of the day in one piece.

The American Ladder Institute (ALI) makes safety training tools available for free to help decrease ladder-related injuries and fatalities caused by misuse. They can be found at ALI's dedicated safety training website and includes an organized curriculum, videos, and resource libraries.

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Training Technicians: Good for Many Reasons

By Todd Leyse, President, Adam's Pest Control, Inc.

Most discussions about technician training focus on customer satisfaction—and rightly so. Well-trained technicians deliver more consistent service, diagnose problems instead of guessing, and reduce callbacks. Training also impacts managers, operations, culture, and long-term enterprise value. In this article, however, we'll focus on three areas leaders care about most: **customers, technicians, and financial performance.**

Good for Your Customers

Customers don't just buy pest control; they buy confidence. A trained technician explains what they're seeing, why it matters, and what comes next. That professionalism builds trust and reduces friction at the door. Fewer callbacks, fewer complaints, and more consistent service are the natural result.

Customers do not see your training program—but they absolutely feel the outcome.

Good for Your Technicians

Untrained technicians operate in survival mode. They guess, second-guess, and rely on trial and error. That stress shows up as burnout, disengagement, and turnover. Training replaces uncertainty with confidence. It gives technicians a clear standard, a path to mastery, and proof that the company is invested in their growth. People stay longer when they feel competent and valued.

Good for Your Financials

Callbacks are one of the most expensive "invisible" costs in pest control—free labor, free materials, and lost capacity. Training attacks that cost at its source. Well-trained technicians also support stronger pricing because professionalism justifies value. Add reduced turnover and lower recruiting costs, and training becomes one of the highest-return investments an owner can make.

You are already paying for training—either intentionally or through mistakes, rework, and churn. The smart operators choose the former.

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Monitoring for Stored Product Pests

By Anna Iversen, BCE, Control Solutions, Inc.

The calls about insect pests in Minnesota and neighboring northern states tend to slow down in the winter. So many of our insect pests come from the exterior, such as ants and large filth flies, and they simply can't survive our harsh winters. But those that are living in the interior, such as German cockroaches, bed bugs, small filth flies, and stored product pests may have no idea how cold it is because we keep our homes and commercial facilities at a temperature that's comfortable to us—so is also comfortable to them. It's therefore important to keep these interior pests in mind as we do our interior inspections and establish our monitoring protocols.

Stored product pest monitoring can be trickier than monitoring for other pests for a few reasons. Monitoring is not the same as control. If we walk into someone's home and see they have Indianmeal moths, placing Indianmeal moth pheromone traps aren't going to control the problem. They may give you an idea of where the source is and how large the population is, but it's not control because they're not equal opportunity attractants and will never be available to the whole adult population.

That can be confusing because so many of our monitoring tools, such as Insect Light Traps (ILTs) and rodent stations, double as both monitoring and control. We can control some species of stored product pests with pheromones through a technique called mating disruption, which is essentially saturating the air with so much sex pheromone that the males can't find the females and mating is disrupted. But that is a very different tool from pheromone monitoring traps.

There are a lot of stored product pests out there and they do not all respond to the same monitoring tool. For example, if they are able to fly *and* are attracted to light, then an ILT may be a fabulous monitoring tool, as it is for the cigarette beetle. But many of our stored product pests do not fly and some do not orient towards light as adults.

Pheromone traps are typically the go-to for stored product pests. But not all pheromone traps are created equal. Pheromones are species-specific communication and not all pheromones have been synthesized for all stored product pests. That means when we put out a pheromone trap, we're only monitoring for certain species.

There are different types of pheromones used for monitoring traps and they're not all equally effective at drawing the pests to them.

- **Sex pheromones** attract the male of the species to the trap by communicating "come here, I'm ready to mate" which is enticing to males flying around the area. Sex pheromone traps are typically very effective.
- **Aggregate pheromones** attract both sexes (usually) to the trap, but they are basically communicating "come here, I found food or shelter" and since stored product pests live in food, that may not be a big enough draw to the trap.
- **Kairomones** are typically a food attractant. They attract a wide range of species that are looking for food, but, like aggregate pheromones, may not be as effective as sex pheromones because they're relying on the insect needing food and they're probably already happily living in food.

There are also different traps that the pheromones go in:

- **Tent traps** are typically used for flying stored product pests. These are great because they're out of the way.
- **Pit-fall traps** are typically used for crawling stored product pests. These can be a challenge because they get knocked around and lost or crushed.

Many stored product pests are also present outside, so we need to be mindful if we're drawing them in to our facilities (though certainly less of an issue in the winter, when they won't be as present outdoors).

Placement matters. For all traps, we need to place them in areas where stored product pests are likely to be,

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such as food storage areas or equipment storage areas where food residues may remain on the equipment. For pit-fall traps, they need to be placed where they won't be crushed and moved. For tent traps and ILTs, we need to be mindful of proximity to entry points and air currents that could increase or decrease the likelihood of catches.

Put together a monitoring plan that takes into consideration the stored product pests that would most likely be attracted to the area or facility and uses the most effective combination of attractant and trap. This will help to identify a problem before it becomes larger. Since monitoring can be tricky and not all stored product pests have a monitoring tool (some aren't attracted to light or don't fly and they don't have synthesized pheromone) nothing beats inspection along with asking the customer what they've seen.

Once we've figured out what we're dealing with through our monitoring tools, we can select the appropriate control tool. For most stored product pests, sanitation and exclusion will take priority. Residual insecticides may be appropriate in cracks and crevices or surfaces where larvae are crawling.

MPMA Board of Directors Meeting
January 13, 2026

Adam's Pest Control or via Zoom

Present:
Rusty Binkley
Gurinderbir Chahal
Mohammed El Damir
Brain Elm
Nate Heider
Todd Leyse
Morgan Manderfield
Brandon Raifstanger
Dana Robb
Julie Schmid
Michell Smith
Lance Watrin
Chrstine Wicks

The meeting was called to order by president Nate Heider
The October board meeting minutes were approved via email.

Financial Report (Todd)
We have improved our collections and record keeping. By comparison, 2025 looks much healthier than 2024 but that was, in part, due to delayed collections in 2024 with many crossing into 2025. The report was accepted.

President's Report (Nate)
Nate reported that he serves on the board for the NPMA's Sales Ethics Work Group but they have not been very active lately.

Minnesota Department of Agriculture (G)
- G noted that he had missed some meetings due to notices going to the wrong email address. This has been corrected and he plans to continue to attend.
- He reported on MPH record-keeping requirements:
  - There are new people are in the department and he talked with them about the requirements in 18D statute, specifically B.37. These focus on what is required by the Commissioner and what is required by the EPA. Whatever you find in the template is required by the Commissioner, the EPA, or statute unless it is noted as optional.
  - Focus is on:
    - Size of treated area
    - Total amount of restricted-use pesticide applied per application
    - Specific crops and commodities where application marking is required
  - Discussion was held on the need for better description and communication of these rules.
- Todd reported that they had a good meeting with the MDA, who acknowledged some of the existing issues they've had.

ILT Lamps (Mohammed)
There is a trend in our industry to change from UV to LED light bulbs. You need to recycle the bulbs and keep records. Todd recommends doing this in bulk rather than individually. There is no deadline stated in the phase-out.

Conference Update (Dr. Kells)
- Dr. Kells distributed and discussed the tentative conference schedule this morning. He is waiting for confirmation from two more speakers.
- We will be holding three concurrent sessions for each period, and then repeating them twice more, so that all attendees can hear all presentations in the limited seating space we have available. This was the format last year – with both positive and negative feedback. Next year we may look for a new venue as we are outgrowing the current one.

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Board Meeting Minutes, cont.

- Rather than having vendors speak three times to introduce themselves, they will split into three groups and each vendor introduce themselves to one-third of the attendees.
- One of the topics is on termites and the speaker is circulating a survey about training needs. Attendees will be asked to complete that. He will also discuss current issues around Minnesota companies offering termite services, which have been addressed by the state attorney general's office.
- Dr. Kells requested two or three volunteers to help usher attendees from room to room, and also three to do introductions.
- Dana reported that we currently have 18 exhibitors registered, with room for 20 or maybe a few more.
- The online program will be up on or about March 20th.

SPARS Update (Todd/Caroline/Robb)

- Todd reported that there was a SPAR meeting in November but no one from MPMA attended.
- The House has passed an appropriations Committee for funding the EPA. But it did not include legislation that MPMA was lobbying for, which was a nationwide preemption stopping states from giving local communities the opportunity to set their own pesticide rules.
- Discussion was held regarding the beginning of a new term for SPARs and whether there was an new interest. A notice went out to all members but no responses were received. Robb is currently between jobs and may not want to renew his involvement. ACTION: Nate will check with Caroline and Robb.

Status of Bylaws Review (Morgan)

Todd, Dana, and Morgan had one meeting and looked over the existing bylaws. Morgan draft changes but more review is still needed before they are sent to the board and/or membership at large. The three, plus Nate, will meet and complete the draft. ACTION: Morgan will set up the meeting.

Other Business

- We are currently working on the spring issue of the newsletter.
- The ASPRO mid-year meeting is April 21st, the same day as the next MPMA board meeting, and will be held in Orlando. Additionally, they just updated their website.
- The MDA has a new inspector named Alex Hildreth. He will be contributing articles to the newsletter.

Meeting was adjourned at 12:33 p.m.

Next Meeting

Tuesday, April 21st - location TBD (note: we're going back to the original schedule of the third Tuesday, rather than the 2nd)

MPMA Leadership Team

President
Nathan Heider, MN Pest Elimination

Past President
Morgan Manderfield, Ecolab

President-Elect
Caroline Kohnert, Plunkett's Pest Control, Inc.

Treasurer
Todd Leyse, Adam's Pest Control. Inc

Director
Lane Zimmereman, Rainbow Pest Experts

Allied Member Liaison
Rusty Binkley, Rockwell Labs, Ltd.

Executive Director
Dana Robb