

PROFESSIONAL PEST MANAGER



AUTUMN 2025

OCCASIONAL INSECT PESTS

EUROPEAN WASP TRAPPING AND BAITING IN AUSTRALIA

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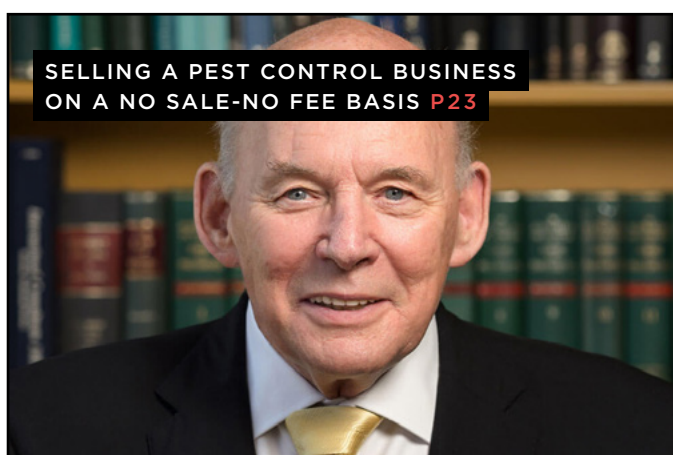
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EDITOR'S WORD

FIONA FRASER



Although we are heading into autumn, the continued warm weather (and rainfall on the east coast) means pest pressure remains high across much of the country, which is great for business.

The big industry news in recent months has been the reclassification of pest management as a trade. Acting President of AEPMA **John Murray** shares his insights on what this means for the industry now and in the near future.

With the cooler months around the corner, rodents become the pest that start driving customer calls. Our Rodent Control feature examines the new four-in-one mouse trap from UK supplier Pelsis and shares a pest manager's experience of using non-anticoagulant rodenticide blocks.

As European wasp queens gear up to leave their nests and prepare for hibernation, pest managers can take advantage by offering wasp control as an add-on service. Our Occasional Insect Pests feature covers wasp trapping, baiting and nest elimination using a range of products on the market. We also share the latest research about on-pet flea treatments and all you need to know about bed bug bites.

What makes a good pest control CRM? Our Software and Digital Tech feature explores key considerations for pest managers before deciding on a CRM. Our Business Management feature outlines the latest changes to Google reviews and also provides tips on how to get the best price for the sale of your business.

Importantly, with safety the number one consideration for pest managers, our Health and Safety section features a useful reference article on choosing the correct respirator.

And finally, there's something a little different in our Termites feature in the form of a guest article from termite expert and textbook author **Ion Staunton**.

We hope you enjoy this latest issue.

Fiona Fraser

NEWS

JOHN MURRAY APPOINTED ACTING PRESIDENT OF AEPMA

In December 2024, Vasili Tsoutouras announced that he would be taking a leave of absence from his role as President of AEPMA, officially stepping down at the 2025 Pesticon conference in August 2025.



John Murray

Current AEPMA Vice President **John Murray** has taken on the role of Acting President until a new President is elected at the AGM in August 2025.

Mr Murray has served on the QLD AEPMA committee for many years and has a long background in pest control, specifically within the training sector.

He began his pest control career in 1996 with Amalgamated Pest Control (APC) in Lismore, NSW. After several years working as a field technician and coach of new trainees, Mr Murray bought the APC Ballina franchise.

After many years building a successful pest control business, Mr Murray found his passion was in training and education, which eventually led to him becoming head of APC's Training and Technical Team in 2013. In his current role as training manager for Flick Anticimex RTO (Pacific Region), he shares his technical expertise and supports around 800 technicians and subcontractors.

In his role as Acting President, Mr Murray hopes to continue AEPMA's great work in promoting professionalism in pest management. He has worked on several Codes of Practice and

as a representative on external working parties and committees promoting industry initiatives and training package development. He is passionate about all aspects of the pest management industry, especially in the mentoring and training of the next generation of pest managers.

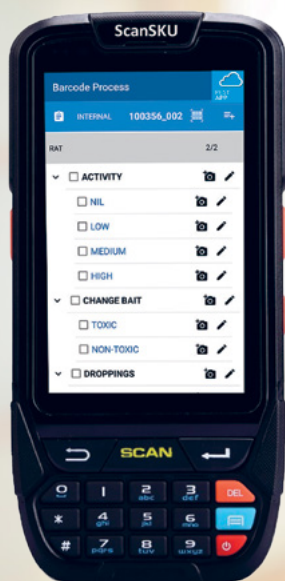
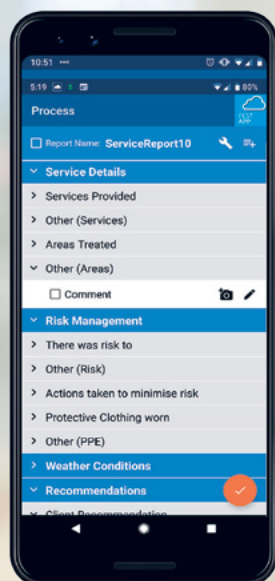
"AEPMA's 2025 focus areas include enhancing industry engagement, training, workforce development, and the technical trade journey. Our national and state volunteers are diligently working to implement these initiatives for the benefit of the entire industry," said Mr Murray.

"I look forward to Pesticon 2025, from August 6-8 in Adelaide, where we will also elect AEPMA's new President.

"AEPMA represents pest control businesses of all sizes. For more information or to get involved, please contact your local state representative, which can be found in the AEPMA Directory online, or email me at vicepresident@aepma.com.au."

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PEST MANAGEMENT AS A TRADE – WHAT IT MEANS FOR THE INDUSTRY

The latest release of the Occupation Standard Classification for Australia has confirmed the re-classification of Pest Control Technician from Labourers (Group 8) to Technician and Trade Workers (Group 3).

This change means pest managers are no longer regarded as labourers by the federal government and will hold the same occupation status as other professional technical tradespeople such as engineers, building technicians and skilled agricultural workers.

This is a significant development for the pest management industry. But why did the industry push for the re-classification and what opportunities does it create?

Why change the classification?

There has long been a feeling in the industry that the classification as Labourer was not an accurate reflection of the skill and knowledge required by the role of a pest technician.

John Murray, Acting President of AEPMA, said, “I have always considered myself a trade worker and pest control/management



OSCA replaces ANZSCO as Australia's Occupational Classification System

as a trade, similar to other trade occupations, so this new classification fits with my belief.

“As an industry we believed we were misclassified under ANZSCO; we are a technical trade, not labourers. To validate this belief, nearly 100 pest managers were surveyed at Pesticon 2024 and 97% considered pest management a technical trade. It is clear from discussions on our industry social media pages that the majority also agree. It also makes sense that pest control is grouped with other licensed trade occupations.

“At the end of the day, pest control is an essential service, as we look after public health and the safety and assets of our clients, which requires technical skill and knowledge.”

The re-classification provides official recognition of the status of pest control as a technical trade, which is more than just a feel-good factor for both the industry and individual; it has the potential to open up a range of opportunities for the industry, companies and technicians.

AEPMA is focusing on two key areas of opportunity initially. Firstly, to push for inclusion as a Priority Occupation, which will provide significant recruitment benefits for businesses. Secondly, to review, develop and approve a new training and assessment package for the industry, which will also consider licensing.

Immediate benefits for pest control companies

Recognition as a technical trade allows our industry to push for inclusion as a Priority Occupation under the Australian Apprenticeship Priority List (which also includes traineeships).

This will provide pest businesses with access to employer funding for training, training support payments (trainees) and other government support programs e.g. women in trades, disability and skilled migration. At a time when finding new employees is a major constraint on business growth, this will provide some relief. Without inclusion on the Australian Apprenticeship Priority List, however, government support for the pest control industry will be limited. The hope is that Pest Control Technician will be added before the end of 2025.

One question many pest managers will ask is whether this change in categorisation might lead to changes in pay rates. Ultimately, pay rates will be dictated by the industry as currently most companies pay above the award.

Improvements to training and licensing

It is widely recognised in the industry that the training and licensing system is not working, and change is required.

In acknowledgement of the industry wanting the training system to be better, BuildSkills Australia, the Jobs and Skills Council (JSC) responsible for pest management, and AEPMA have been collaborating on a proposal for a review of the pest management training package. The proposal will be submitted to the Federal Government in early 2025.

BuildSkills Australia is the Jobs and Skills Council for the built



Pest Control Technician is now classified as a trade rather than labourer

environment sector – established by the federal government to work with industry to find solutions to the workforce challenges facing the construction, property and water industries. Following the recognition of pest control as a trade, Mr Murray acknowledged the high level of engagement from BuildSkills Australia.

“BuildSkills has assured AEPMA that they are open to any or all changes to the training package and for the project to take as long as it needs to ensure a suitable outcome for the industry. This is a significant step forward from previous package reviews that have been hampered by government red tape and unrealistic completion timeframes,” said Mr Murray.

“This is a watershed moment for our industry, an opportunity that has not arisen since the competency standards were introduced, but it will be up to the industry to drive the change.”

This proposal (once the project is approved) will be comprehensive and include a review of all aspects of training, assessment and ultimately licensing.

Mr Murray was keen to emphasise the collaborative effort required. “It will be industry-led, so when the time comes, there will be a call-out for experts to get involved in

advisory groups and working parties to make sure we receive a wide range of input from different parts of the industry, and businesses of all sizes,” he said.

Apprenticeship or traineeship?

Recognition as a technical trade does not mean the industry has to implement an apprenticeship scheme.

“We just need a robust and specialised training system that leads to a technical qualification outcome. This can be gained through a traineeship or an apprenticeship. Which path the industry chooses and how long the training should take will be part of the review process,” said Mr Murray.

“My opinion is that a traineeship works better for our industry, as we are a unique trade where a traditional apprenticeship model does not fit.”

A bright future ahead

The re-classification of pest control as a technical trade is a significant development for the industry and can provide the platform for changes that can transform the industry. However, a significant amount of work is required to explore all the opportunities that this re-classification provides and many of these are ‘once in a generation’ opportunities, which are important to get right.



Mr Murray said, “I am eager to see the advancements in our industry through the technical trade journey, which will significantly benefit all pest management businesses. This crucial first step aims to ensure our industry is recognised as a priority occupation by federal, state, and territory governments, deserving the same support as other trades and licensed occupations.

“As an industry-led initiative, the redevelopment of our training package will require contributions from all stakeholders, including professional pest managers, registered training organisations, suppliers, and manufacturers. When the time comes, I encourage everyone to participate and contribute to these initiatives.

“For more information or if you would like to get involved, please contact me at vicepresident@aepma.com.au”

Re-classification – A long process from Labourer to Technician and Trade Worker

Until recently, the occupation of a Pest Management Technician had been regarded by the Government as a form of labour, with Pest Management Technician classified by the Australian and New Zealand Standard Classification of Occupations (ANZSCO) as a Labourer (Group 8). The Labourers category includes those workers that assist more skilled workers in construction, mining, forestry and other trades involving “repetitive physical tasks using hand and power tools and machines.”

The drive to change the classification has been the work of an AEPMA working group over several years, with the core team consisting of **Phil Sayer** (Garrards), **John Murray** (Flick Anticimex), and **Bruce Dekker** (ProTrain), with support from the Garrards management team and the wider AEPMA organisation. 2024 saw the team achieve their goal, with the change of classification first announced at Pesticon 2024 and ratified on December 6, 2024 by the Australian Government.

Under the Occupation Standard Classification for Australia (OSCA), which replaces ANZSCO,

Pest Controllers/Technicians have been moved to Group 3 Technicians and Trade Workers, specifically Group 3991 (Pest Control Technicians) under Group 39 (Other Technicians and Trade Workers). A Pest Control Technician being described as one who, “Implements and applies pest management techniques to manage and control animal and invertebrate pests inside and outside domestic, commercial and industrial premises.”

HACCP CERTIFICATION FOR SUNDEW PRODUCTS

HACCP International has awarded new 2025 certifications to a range of Sundew's pest management products. These certifications underscore Sundew's dedication to safety, quality, and performance in food-handling environments, reinforcing its reputation for offering quality pest control solutions.

HACCP-certified Sundew products include: ANTagonistPRO 80 SC Polymer Enhanced Bifenthrin; AttractANT Ant Bait Gel; BattleaxePRO Professional Crack & Crevice Aerosol; BattleaxePRO Roach Bait Gel; DeltaPRO 25 SC Professional Insecticide; EnsnarePRO 50 SC Indoxacarb Insecticide; StarrdustPRO IGR Industrial Strength Insecticidal Dust; ANTstripz; PestieDOTZ and the Vespex Range of European Wasp products.

The two HACCP International certificates can be downloaded from the 'downloads' page on the Sundew Solutions website.



Sundew Solutions' CEO David Priddy with the HACCP-certified range

NEW HEAD OF SYNGENTA PROFESSIONAL SOLUTIONS

Syngenta has announced the appointment of **Steve Bitter** as the new head of Syngenta Professional Solutions for Australia and New Zealand. He also takes on the role of director for Macspred, Syngenta's non-crop weed business.



Steve Bitter

Since joining Syngenta in 2016 as a territory sales manager, Mr Bitter has demonstrated his leadership capabilities and deep industry knowledge.

With a background rich in various business and customer-facing roles, he is well equipped to lead the Professional Solutions ANZ team into the future. His appointment brings a fresh perspective to the strategic direction of the business.

"I'm very excited to take on this new challenge as Head of Syngenta Professional Solutions ANZ. Having worked closely with our customers across various roles, I've gained deep appreciation for their needs and aspirations," said Mr Bitter.

"My goal is to leverage this understanding to enable our customers to succeed in new

and innovative ways. I also look forward to building on our strong foundations and driving growth through collaboration, innovation, and customer-centric strategies."

The previous head of Professional Solutions ANZ, **Peter Holmes**, has been appointed head of marketing for Syngenta Australia and New Zealand, effective January 1, 2025.

BUSINESS AWARD FOR MPL LEADER

In November 2024, **Dr Deling Ma**, owner of MPL Training Centre, won the annual award for Multicultural Business Person of the Year. Dr Ma was one of four winners of Brisbane City Council's Lord Mayor's Multicultural Business Awards, which were presented at Brisbane City Hall.

The award recognises Dr Ma as a successful multicultural Brisbane business leader and his contribution to the Brisbane economy. It acknowledges him as a local champion of enterprise who has a global outlook for his business.

Dr Ma received the honour for his work as a successful research scientist, entomologist and business owner. After earning his PhD from the University of Queensland in 2001, he worked on a number of R&D projects that resulted in the development of five patented biopesticides that are widely used in the production of organic foods, significantly reducing the use of toxic insecticides.

In 2005, he transitioned from research and development to urban pest management, specialising in delivering in eco-friendly pest control solutions. With a desire to utilise his knowledge, he founded Eco-Global Termite Doctor in 2008, initially focusing on a unique niche market – the local Chinese community. Today, the company continues to grow, offering general pest services and termite work in all Greater Brisbane areas to all communities.



Dr Deling Ma accepting the award for **Multicultural Business Person of the Year**

In 2019, Dr Ma became the owner and principal of MPL Training Centre, which provides pest management training across Australia and the Asia-Pacific region. He also runs a successful crop solutions business exporting innovative foliar fertilisers to China, generating revenues for Australia and creating job opportunities on the Gold Coast, from where the company operates.

"Brisbane is home to some incredible multicultural business owners who make living and working in our city even better, and we are proud to celebrate their success," said Brisbane Lord Mayor **Adrian Schrinner**. "Each year these awards recognise the talent, innovation and resilience our businesses continue to show across a range of industries".

Dr Ma strongly believes that 'teamwork makes the dream work'. "This award does not belong to me; it goes to everyone in my business," said Dr Ma in his acceptance speech.

He acknowledged the MPL training manager **Shane Rich**, principal entomologist **Gary Cochrane**, senior trainer/assessor **Ray Brookes**, Eco-Global business partners **Enzo Pilotti** and **LG Liu**, and his UQ PhD supervisors, the world-renowned entomological professors **Myron Zalucki** and Prof. **Gordon Gordh**.

"Without the mentorship from my UQ Professors, the combined and dedicated efforts of MPL and Eco-Global staff, this award would be just a dream, we did this all together!" said Dr Ma.

NEW TERRITORY SALES MANAGER FOR SYNGENTA

Syngenta Professional Pest Management has welcomed **Kristy Dawson** to the team in the role of Territory Sales Manager. She will represent Syngenta's range of pest management products with a focus on delivering excellent customer service.



Kristy Dawson

Ms Dawson is skilled in modern pest management practices and has strong industry knowledge. Joining Syngenta from her most recent position as trainer and assessor at MPL Training, she is well versed in delivering industry-leading training to professional pest technicians.

Prior to that, Ms Dawson Kristy worked as a pest manager, gaining experience in all facets of pest control administration and management, including termites, bird proofing and pre-construction. Along with her certification in Urban Pest Management in Training & Assessment, Ms Dawson's practical, hands-on experience brings depth to her role at Syngenta.

"Working at Syngenta means I've reached the career goals that I set myself," said Ms Dawson. "I worked in the industry, I went into training, and now I'm excited to take it to the next level in the corporate sector of pest control – I'm excited to bring additional value to Syngenta's customers."

She is also keen to work in partnership with the established Syngenta team, in particular Peter Ambrose-Pearce, Technical Services Lead. "To learn off someone so knowledgeable is definitely a big part of it," she added.

Ms Dawson's strong knowledge of practical pest management enables her to assist Syngenta customers with anything product related.



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NEW ZEALAND NEWS

PMANZ HITS THE ROAD

After the resounding success of last year's biennial PMANZ Conference in Auckland, which was both well attended and highly praised, the Pest Management Association of New Zealand is excited to announce that PMANZ is hitting the road in 2025!

Recognising the growing need for accessible, high quality training, PMANZ is bridging the gap between Garrards' Roadshows and Key Industries' Pestaculors with a brand-new series of regional events scheduled to take place throughout July and August. These events are designed to provide valuable insights, professional development, and networking opportunities for pest management professionals across New Zealand.

"We are planning to bring these events to Auckland, Hamilton, Tauranga, Wellington, Christchurch, and Dunedin, with a couple more locations currently under consideration," said **Gerwyn Jones**, President of PMANZ. "This means that no matter where you are based, there is a good chance a PMANZ event will be coming to a city near you. These sessions will be hosted by the highly respected Dr. Paul Craddock, who will lead discussions on a variety of essential industry topics. Attendees will gain valuable knowledge and skills that will count towards their 2025 Continuing Professional Development (CPD) requirements, ensuring they stay up to date with the latest advancements in pest management."

Best of all, these events will be completely free for PMANZ members, reinforcing the organisation's commitment to supporting and upskilling professionals within the industry. Non-members are also welcome to attend for a reasonable fee, making

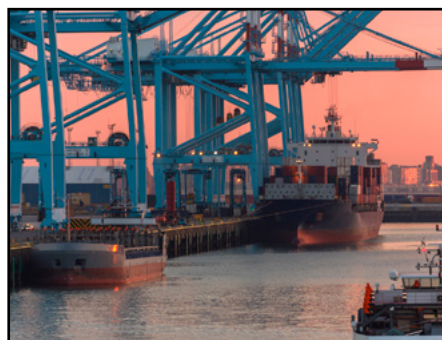
this an excellent opportunity for anyone looking to expand their expertise, connect with industry peers, and take their professional development to the next level.

As the details are being finalised, pest managers who are interested in attending can stay up to date by visiting the PMANZ website (pmanz.nz) as well as keeping an eye out for future updates in this magazine. These free regional events across New Zealand are a unique opportunity to learn from the best, network with fellow professionals, and enhance your career in the pest management industry.

SHIPPING INSURER AGREES \$24.1 MILLION PAYOUT FOR RODENT DAMAGE

The compensation claim for rodent damage to a kiwi fruit shipment has now been resolved, with the shipping cargo insurer paying Zespri, the owner of the shipment, \$24.1 million.

In April of 2024, when the first kiwi fruit shipment of the season was sent to Europe, it arrived in Belgium only for importers to find signs of rodent damage. With fruit quality and food safety integral to the Zespri brand, the entire shipment was quarantined and then destroyed, being sent for use in biofuel. DNA investigations found that the mouse infestation on the ship was not of New Zealand origin, firmly placing the responsibility of the issue with the shipping company and their pest control practices.



The mouse infestation in the Kiwi shipment was detected on arrival in Zeebrugge, Belgium

GENETIC ENGINEERING – AN OPTION FOR WASP CONTROL?

Researchers from the University of Otago, in collaboration with researchers in Australia, the UK and California, have recently completed sequencing and interpreting the genomes of the three common invasive paper wasps – common wasp (*Vespa vulgaris*), German wasp (*V. germanica*) and the western yellowjacket (*V. pensylvanica*). The researchers hope that this may lead to identifying potential options to genetically engineer variations in the genome (gene drives), which could be used as part of control programs.

One example that has been proposed is that the genes targeting sperm production could be modified. Queen wasps containing this edited gene could be released, resulting in the production of male wasps with this defect. Queens that mate with these infertile males will not be able to found new nests.

Researchers have modelled how such technology could impact wasp populations in New Zealand. Whilst it would not cause a rapid decline in wasp numbers, nor achieve complete extinction, it could have a big enough impact to eliminate their biodiversity threat. The modelling suggests that wasp numbers would not be significantly impacted for the first 15 years after release, but 25 years after release, wasp numbers could have been reduced by 90%.

More work needs to be done on this technology and before any potential release of genetically modified wasps, as not only do robust technical risk assessments need to be carried out, but public discussions and engagement will be important. The team is looking at ways to further mitigate risks by potentially targeting only the wasp genotypes found in New Zealand, thereby reducing the risk of the modified wasp impacting the wasp in its native habitat in other parts of the world.

PREDATOR FREE 2050 UPDATE

Predator Free 2050 is probably the most ambitious invasive predator eradication project anywhere in the world. Apart from general interest for New Zealand pest managers, with a significant focus of the program on rodent (especially rat) eradication, there are potential learnings on rodent control techniques and products.

The program has released two documents summarising the achievements to date ('The Story So Far') and key learnings from the research ('Learnings So Far').

One of the key interim goals of the program is to demonstrate that predator eradication can be achieved in areas of mainland New Zealand of at least 20,000 hectares without the use of fences. Currently over 114,000 hectares are in the 'defence phase'

of elimination – predators have been eliminated from an area that is now being defended against re-invasion. One specific milestone was reached in November 2023 with the elimination of rats and mustelids (stoats and weasels) from the Miramar Peninsula.

A second interim goal was to have one million hectares of mainland New Zealand where predators are suppressed by 2025. Counting only landscape projects funded and supported by PF2050 Limited, 640,000 hectares are under suppression or elimination management. The project believes that they are well on the way towards achieving this goal.

In terms of learnings from a project management point of view, individual project success has been best achieved by having locals on the ground supported by technical experts, rather than having projects governed by agencies. This local management, by default, helps with local engagement and communication, building trust in the project.



Stoat (*Mustela erminea*)

These summary documents are available on the Predator Free 2050 website.

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TERMITES

TRUST TERMITE PRODUCTS WITH EXTENSIVE FIELD TESTING

Pest managers know it's important to use registered products and that 'the label is the law'. However, pest managers should also understand a little bit about how products get registered, as it could affect their purchasing decision. This is particularly the case for termite protection products when it is important that pest managers can trust the performance of the products they use. This is not only important for their own peace of mind but also for that of their customers.

In Australia, when registering a new product, the registering company needs to provide a complete data set, which includes a toxicology and efficacy package. The efficacy package will often include both laboratory and field tests, to demonstrate the product works as claimed. For termite products, this typically means field trials running for at least three years and normally five years, in various locations around the country. The registrant of the new product typically has this data 'protected' for a period of time. However, after this time, it becomes possible for other companies to register similar products making the same claims on a reduced data package. These registrations are often submitted



Mastotermes darwiniensis, workers and soldier

on the basis of bioequivalence, through argument and/or reduced efficacy package.

The implication of this registration process is that although a pest manager may see similar registered products making the same claims, it does not mean that the products have the same efficacy data set behind them. This goes beyond just the registration data; typically, the innovator has also gone through a long product development period to test prototypes to arrive at the final design. Not only does this give the manufacturer (and pest manager) confidence in the product's performance, it also provides the manufacturer with a deep understanding of how the product works.

This need for extensive field testing as part of its development process is key to all Termseal Australia innovations. Even with small incremental innovations, Termseal doesn't make assumptions – the team carries out extensive field testing. A case in point is the recent development and launch of Ura-fen Shield TWB 100 mm.



Cylinders of foam of different formulations were placed in a plastic tub, along with wood to attract the termites. Additional wood was placed inside the cylinder of foam with metal gauze placed at the top and bottom of the cylinder. To access this wood, the termite would need to chew through the foam. This tub shows high levels of termite activity, putting the products under realistic severe termite pressure



Plastic tubs containing foam samples, with holes in the side to allow termite access, were buried in the ground in Townsville in areas of high *Mastotermes* activity

Ura-fen Shield TWB is a triple layer sheet providing a moisture proof and termite resistant barrier for use in pre-construction termite protection. It has been on the market for over 12 years and is available in rolls of various widths (300 mm, 900 mm and 1800 mm) for a multitude of applications. However, there was a need for a thicker sheet foam material for use in cold joints, construction joint, and isolation joint situations.

When doing field testing with termites, the product always needs to be tested against *Mastotermes darwiniensis*, or 'Mastos', as per AS3660.3-2014. With their voracious appetite and chewing power, testing physical or chemical termite products against *Mastos* is the ultimate test. Australia is the only country in the world where *Mastotermes darwiniensis* is considered an economically important termite.

Even though Ura-fen Shield TWB 100 mm is the same product as the proven Ura-fen Shield TWB, just with increased thickness, Termseal still embarked on a series of field trials during development. It proved an essential exercise, as it highlighted the need to improve the manufacturing processes to ensure an even distribution of active through the thicker foam layer. The result: a new product that delivers proven protection even against *Mastos*.

"At Termseal, field testing is part of our DNA. When you're selling a product that is meant to deliver termite protection for '50 years or the life of a building', we need to know the products works. It gives our customers confidence they can trust our products and it gives the homeowner peace of mind that their home is protected by a proven product," commented **Peter Brigden**, general manager at Termseal Australia.

"Our advice to all pest managers, no matter the product you use, is to ask the manufacturer to provide proof that demonstrates their product works under Australian conditions."



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SOME THINGS CHANGE... SOME DON'T



Ion Staunton, *Entomologist and Author*

The pests don't change. Termites have been evolving for millions of years; their appearance, their habits and basic food preferences essentially stay the same. Food and fabric pests? Same.

Termites have only been a problem in Australia for the last 237 years. New people arrived and began building things with wood. Termites from nearby colonies found and ate it. Australian humans took about a hundred years to come up with metal 'ant' caps to force termites out into the open to gain access to a building and humans took 'only' another 15-20 years to work out how to get them to take arsenic back to wherever their colony was to kill it. That event was just over a hundred years ago. About 60 years ago in the 1960s, we decided to build homes on concrete slabs, but termites still snuck into where the wood was hidden and the damage bill actually increased. Now we only use preservative-treated timber... or metal framework. However, there were millions of buildings built before then... and termites keep finding lots of them each year (and that's why you are still important).

Phil Hadlington and I wrote our first pest control textbook in 1961. He passed away a couple of years ago and, as I'm turning 90 this year, I'm revising *Urban Pest Management in Australia* and also *Australian Termites* to bring them up to date. I've almost finished the job but it will take the publisher a while to get them onto the presses and into your hands (and glovebox).

Back to the first paragraph... "the pest don't change... the situations do."

Entomologists were few and far between in 1900. Pests were a pain; humans found and killed them with whatever was handy at the time. Natural pyrethrum was



The TermiSensor is a device placed on top of termite monitors to detect termite activity and send notifications to the pest manager



From the late 19th century, insecticidal powders were used for general pest control

one of the first pesticides (after boiling water!). It was a powder ground up from the flowers of a chrysanthemum hundreds of years ago. It had widespread use in WW1 to kill lice (thriving inside soldiers' uniforms) to prevent the spread of typhus. Most of the first pesticides were administered as baits to poison the pest i.e. rodents, ants and cockroaches. Some of the actives were from minerals such as copper arsenate and borax mixed with whatever the pest preferred to eat; grain or fruit for rodents and anything sweet and syrupy for ants, for example. Petroleum oils applied to an insect killed it but if another 'secret' ingredient could increase the speed of kill, that would sell on the spot. Prospective purchasers wanted to see instant results and the salesmen (and maybe women) used demos to watching groups to show how fast it killed and therefore how good it was.

He may not have been the first to think outside the (instant killing) box, but as **Bill Flick** was one of us (a pestie) I'll give him the credit. By the way, he told me this story at his 80th birthday party. Arsenic was being used as a bait to kill rats. It was a slow kill but they died. He was a dairy farmer, he also had beehives and termites kept eating his fences, milking sheds and house. One morning he watched a bee fly from a hive to a flowering shrub, scramble around inside the flowers then head back to the hive with its hind legs plastered and bulging with nectar. He wondered. Bees are communal insects. So are termites. If bees carried food back to their hive to feed their queen and young and to store as honey... aren't worker termites doing almost the same thing? Taking chewed up wood back to their nests to feed their queen and nestmates? Arsenic dust kills slowly, but only after it is digested. Workers groomed each other, regurgitated food and passed it on. He tried it. It worked. And the rest is history. Dig out a copy of *Colonies in Collision*; it's a history book I wrote with **Doug Howick**.

Now we have an entomologist who went another step: digital. I came up with the idea to put sensors inside termite monitors just so you didn't need to go multiple times a year to check them... only to find there are no termites... again... and again. De-motivating. Perhaps more importantly, with these new sensors you are digitally notified when termites have actually arrived at a specific monitor and you get to begin baiting before they've eaten all the timber and left the monitor vacant. The sensor is designed to recognise termites from slugs, cockroaches and other 'false-alarmists'. The pests don't change, but the products and technology do!

What's next? If I live another ten years, I might write another history article (maybe assisted by AI).

CAN TERMITES LEARN?

Social insects have developed very complex societies. But this does not necessarily mean they are intelligent or can learn. Certainly, they have developed effective and specific communication methods (often chemical) and exhibit complex behaviours on a colony scale. But what about the individual? Bees have been studied in great detail, particularly honeybees, and have been demonstrated to exhibit associative conditioning. This is perhaps not surprising as such learning is essential to efficient foraging. Conditional learning has been demonstrated in ants too, where they can be conditioned to avoid a food they previously found attractive. But what about termites?

Despite the fact termite colonies are complex and they exhibit quite complicated behaviour, it has generally been accepted that individual termites are not 'intelligent' and are not able to learn. This is probably only because there has been little research on the subject. However, researchers have recently demonstrated that individual termites are capable of learning.

Using the dampwood termite, *Zootermopsis angusticollis*, researchers carried out trials to see if individual termites could be negatively conditioned to change their behaviour. Using a Y-shaped maze, where termites had the choice between two chambers, termites were 'trained' to avoid the right-hand chamber by exposing the termites to a combination of tea tree and lemon juice (repellent odours) whenever the termite chose the right-hand chamber. After ten conditioning rounds, the number of termites avoiding the right-hand chamber in the absence of the repellents decreased significantly, thus proving the termites are indeed capable of learning.

This is just the start of a body of work required to understand the capability of termite learning. The authors mentioned the need for follow-up work to determine the length of memory for such learning events. Understanding potential neural changes associated with memory formation will also be studied. Whilst a first, significant step, the role of learning in the foraging behaviour of termites is a whole body of work that needs to be initiated.

Further reading: Ding Y.E and Li, Z (2024). Termites can learn. Behavioural Processes, 217: 105012. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.beproc.2024.105012>



Dampwood termite (dealate), *Zootermopsis angusticollis* (photo credit: Camille Stephens/iNaturalist)

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SUPPLIER SPOTLIGHT

PELSIS: GLOBAL PEST PRODUCTS UNDER ONE BRAND

In this feature, we turn the spotlight onto some of the key companies within our industry. In this edition, we look at UK product and equipment supplier Pelsis.



Pelsis: Quick Facts

- **Overview:** European manufacturer and distributor of pest control products and equipment. Founded in 1984.
- **Company size:** Head office located in Knaresborough, UK, with 16 sites across the UK, Europe, USA and India.
- **Specialisation:** General pest control including rodent, bird, flying and crawling insect control. Manufacturers of application equipment and insect light traps. Leading innovator of Pelsis Digital remote monitoring systems.
- **International reach:** Distribution networks across the globe. Supplying into Asia Pacific area and Australia for over 20 years.
- **Notable Brands and products:** Insect-O-Cutor, Network Bird, Bird B Gone Trappit, Halo, Luralite, Flytraps, Avisil & Avifix Glue, Avipoint Spikes, Network Nets, B&G sprayers and foggers, SX Multiguards, SX Ones, Euro Mouse Boxes, Agrisense Pheromone Traps, glueboards.

Pelsis is a leading manufacturer of commercial and retail brands, delivering innovative pest control and garden care products to its global customer base. It has gained a strong reputation in the market through its brand heritage and team of experts with extensive market knowledge. As part of the company's mission to operate more sustainably, it is increasingly producing chemical-free, environmentally friendly solutions.

Among its broad product portfolio, which includes insect control, application equipment, rodent control, and bird management, Pelsis developed some of the first modern insect light traps, and the origins of the business date back to the early 1980s. Today, insect traps remain a core part of the Pelsis product offering as the business constantly innovates to remain a leader in this area.



Pelsis headquarters, Knaresborough, UK

Pelsis in Australia

In Australia, pest managers are likely to be familiar with the B&G Equipment brand of spray equipment, which was acquired by Pelsis in 2018. In terms of products, the Network bird management system will be known by pest managers specialising in bird proofing. The range includes leading brands such as Avipoint and Avishock. These high quality bird control products are offered by Pelsis along with expert technical guidance and specification support.

Pelsis also offers a range of flying insect control solutions from its specialist brands Brandenburg and Insect-O-Cutor. Many will recognise these brands through their wide range of insect light trap families such as Infiniti, Halo, Cobra and Pluszap units.

Big brands, backed by support

Pelsis has built its reputation on the heritage of the brands it offers, many of which hold a number one market position in their territories. This includes B&G in North America, as well as Pelsis's flying insect control brands across the Europe and UK markets.

Products are high quality, backed by support services from experts in the field.

Dedicated technical managers are trained specialists on specific pests and fully understand the challenges faced by pest and facilities managers. This means expert advice is provided to customers who are faced with pest infestations. They are given guidance on how best to tackle their problem along with recommendations about which products will prove most effective in the circumstances.

Pelsis technical managers also provide in-depth training to pest managers, end user customers and technical teams on a global scale to ensure best practices are being followed.

The company's technical managers travel around the world to provide in-depth training that is relevant to the pest control requirements of each specific country.



Pelsis general manager, Scott Gammon

Investing in the future

Alongside the range of established, high quality products, sit innovative, new brands that are being developed to meet the ever-changing needs of the pest industry.

R&D is a huge priority for Pelsis; investing in research ensures it is delivering efficient, effective and innovative pest control products to its customers. Pelsis has laboratories located at a number of sites, which allows for effective and robust testing of a wide range of products, including rodenticides, insecticides and insect light traps. This reveals exactly how the products perform within different environments, identifying where they can be most effective for customers.

Customer insight is at the heart of the Pelsis product innovation program. Close working relationships with customers are key, with insight into the needs of customers and consumers forming the foundation for product development.

The goal is to develop intelligent, effective products that meet the requirements of its customers. New products are designed with serviceability, design and quality in mind. Great focus is placed on innovation to allow Pelsis to meet the ever-changing trends and needs of the territories where it operates.

Latest product developments

Significant financial investment in R&D has enabled Pelsis to become a market leader for its fly and flying insect product range. As part of this range, it has launched an intelligent monitoring system called Pelsis Digital that uses proprietary digital technology to deliver remote monitoring of flying insect activity in real time.

The system sends notifications to users alerting them to activity requiring attention once insect catch rates and glueboard capacity thresholds have been met. Data is collected in real time, providing improved insights and helping pinpoint the root cause of problems before they escalate.

Pelsis has also invested in a remote monitoring solution for rodent control.

Pelsis will look to further enhance its digital technology product range as part of the company's wider R&D activity. As part of its mission to develop intelligent products and services, Pelsis also seeks to minimise its environmental impact and support biodiversity. New ways to develop more sustainable practices are continually being sought.

Pest managers can view the latest Pelsis products on the Pelsis website.

What next?

The goal over the coming year and for the future is to continually provide pest managers in Australia with new products which are both sustainable and innovative, as well as of a professional, quality standard.

Pelsis general manager, **Scott Gammon**, commented, "We are excited about the value Pelsis brings to the Australian market and look forward to collaborating with new and existing pest control technicians across the region."

"We want to continue to listen to our customers, understand their needs and ensure we are delivering the right product at the right time, whilst making sure we're offering them innovative solutions that continue to drive our industry forward."



Pelsis Insect Light Trap Centre of Excellence, Birmingham, UK

BUSINESS MANAGEMENT

WHY AUSTRALIAN PEST CONTROL BUSINESS OWNERS SELL TO RENTOKIL

For pest control business owners, the decision to sell their company is often a pivotal moment. It's about more than just a transaction; it's about ensuring the future of their hard work, their employees, and the legacy they've built. Rentokil understands this, offering a unique approach to acquisitions that prioritises long-term growth and stability for the businesses it welcomes into the largest pest control company in the world.

Rentokil's decades of experience in the pest control industry (2025 marks the company's 100 year anniversary) has laid the groundwork for a deep understanding of the challenges and opportunities facing business owners. When a company joins Rentokil, it gains more than just a new owner; it gains a partner dedicated to its continued success. This partnership kicks off with a transparent and respectful valuation process, recognising the true blue worth of the business, including its brand reputation, customer base, and growth potential.

Rentokil's dedicated integration team ensures a smooth and efficient transition process, minimising disruption for employees and customers. The expertise and relationships that existing teams bring to the table are highly valued, which is why Rentokil offers a range of talent development programs, emerging leader training and management leadership development. Retaining talent is a priority, as people are essential to the continued success of the business, and many management roles are filled from internal development and promotion. This commitment to employee wellbeing fosters a sense of security and engagement during and after the transition.

Rentokil's commitment to innovation extends beyond its own operations to the businesses it acquires. By investing in cutting-edge technology, comprehensive training programs, and forward-thinking service innovations, Rentokil empowers acquired businesses to stay ahead of the game. As a global leader in IoT-driven pest control solutions, Rentokil provides access to some of the world's most advanced digital pest management technology. This ensures that acquired businesses stay ahead of the curve, leveraging data-driven insights and smart solutions to enhance efficiency, sustainability, and customer satisfaction.

Many companies who have been acquired by Rentokil are happy to share their experiences. For example, Geelong Pest Control was a notable acquisition in November 2024.

"A number of companies approached us, but Rentokil's engagement and genuine interest in our goals set them apart," said **Shaun Preston**, one of the former owners of Geelong Pest Control. "They invested time in understanding our business, not just the sale itself.



Tom and Kahlee Aldridge, Suburban Pest Management, QLD

"The support throughout the transition was exceptional, with dedicated teams assisting in every area. Rentokil provided the autonomy to pursue our goals, along with ongoing support when needed. If you're thinking about selling, do your homework, know your numbers, consider the long-term vision and choose a partner who values your legacy as much as you do. Rentokil offers a genuine partnership, not just a transaction."

Tom and Kahlee Aldridge from Suburban Pest Management, QLD, also found a supportive partner in Rentokil when their business was acquired in May 2024. "We hadn't considered selling until we received some offers," explained Mr Aldridge. "But those offers prompted us to think about our future and the pressures of running a growing business. We had some personal challenges that made us re-evaluate our priorities. Then, a colleague who had recently sold to Rentokil shared their positive experience. It seemed like the right time."

For Suburban Pest Management, preserving their team and culture was essential. "Maintaining the Suburban brand, the team, and the culture we had built was a key condition," said Mrs Aldridge. "And Rentokil respected that."

The transition, while significant, has been overwhelmingly positive. "The prospect of selling was daunting," admitted Mr Aldridge, "but Rentokil's dedicated team made the process excellent. It's been nearly twelve months, and we're operating seamlessly, with the added benefits of Rentokil's support and resources. Our focus is currently on continuing to manage the business here in Caboolture, but the potential for growth within the larger organisation is very exciting."

Their advice to other business owners? "Begin considering a sale well in advance. Seek advice, implement effective systems, and select a buyer who will value what you've built. In our experience, Rentokil excels in this regard," said Mr Aldridge.



Matea and Shaun Preston, Geelong Pest Control, VIC



Staff training by the Rentokil HR team

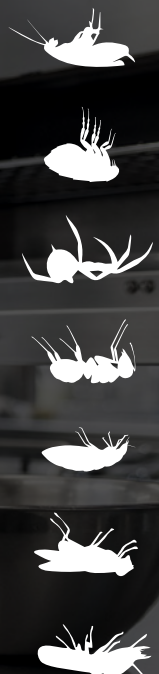
Selling a business is a significant decision, and choosing the right partner is crucial. Rentokil offers more than just financial security; it provides a legacy of growth, innovation, and a deep understanding of the pest control industry. For business owners seeking a future of

continued success, Rentokil provides the support, expertise, and commitment needed to thrive.

Pest control business owners who are interested in exploring the possibilities for their business can make an enquiry through the Rentokil Australia website.

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PEST CONTROL REVIEWS – GOOGLE FAKE REVIEW CLAMPDOWN

Online reviews, particularly Google reviews, are a key element of a successful local SEO strategy. However, as with all SEO techniques there is the correct way of doing things and then there's the dodgy way, so-called 'black hat' techniques. When it comes to reviews, some unethical SEO companies mass-produce fake reviews for their customers in an attempt to boost rankings. Be warned, Google is now cracking down on this!

Online reviews are important. For customers searching for a new pest control company who can't get a recommendation from a friend, online reviews are a key part of the decision-making process. For a local business, customers feel confident in choosing a business once they have between 20-50 Google reviews, as long as they have a high average rating. They don't all have to be 5-star reviews (we'll come back to this), but as long as the average is 4.5 and above, you should be in good shape.

Best practice for Google reviews is to gradually build up reviews over time and importantly, make sure you reply to reviews and ensure you have current reviews (within the last three months). This kind of review profile demonstrates to Google that you are an active, well-run business.

However, some SEO companies try to game the system, to boost the local pack performance of their customers. They essentially create or buy fake reviews, with or without their customer's knowledge. They simply create hundreds of Google accounts with the sole purpose of using these accounts to submit reviews for their customers' businesses. Not surprisingly these are often all 5-star reviews!

This technique has certainly delivered success in the past, even though it is clearly against Google guidelines. The problem with this activity, and indeed any black hat technique, is that although they can deliver great short-term results, sometimes even for longer periods, there is always the risk that it can all come crashing down overnight. If Google decides there is some mischief at play, there can be a catastrophic loss of rankings overnight and potential Google penalties, with potentially business-ending loss of rankings.

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Google is clamping down on fake reviews – 5 star reviews need to be from genuine customers

Google will probably have a number of tools to determine a fake review, but how can you spot a company with a potentially fake review profile? Well as any pest control business that manages their own reviews will know, it's not easy to get a review. It can take several years to get 200 or more reviews. So, any local business that appears to accumulate reviews too quickly or in sudden dumps, or local businesses that have 1000 or more reviews, would certainly look suspicious. Additionally, it really isn't believable that a business only gets 5-star reviews, certainly for a business that has been operating for several years, even a good business. The stats say this is just very unlikely.

In the UK, the Competition and Markets Authority (CMA) has been negotiating with Google to ensure that it actually polices its own policies and acts when businesses are clearly creating fake reviews. The aim is for consumers to be able to trust Google reviews and use them to make their purchasing decisions.

Google will start to attach warnings to companies found to have artificially boosted their star ratings and will potentially deactivate their review function altogether. Individuals who repeatedly post fake or misleading reviews will be banned from posting. As a regulator, the CMA will monitor Google's performance in dealing with businesses with unusual review profiles and fake review brokers.

The latest news on this subject is that it appears Google has updated its algorithm and/or review of Google reviews, as Google reviews have been disappearing from a number of pest control business (and indeed businesses around the world) – even genuine reviews. This may be an unintended consequence of their fake review crackdown, so the reviews may reappear. However, there are a whole range of reasons why a review may get deleted by Google (not just because it's a fake review), for example if the person who placed the review has closed their Google account. You can't always control Google, so control what you can – get genuine reviews (with original wording) and reply to all reviews.

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LEARN ON THE GO: GET ACCREDITED WHILE YOU WORK

While climate change affects us all, some of its effects are especially significant for timber pest inspectors. Termites, which thrive in the heat and humidity, already pose a threat to Australian homeowners. However, as climate change is driving increased temperatures and higher rainfall in many areas, the termite season will get longer and termites are likely to expand their areas of activity – putting even more Australian homes at risk of costly termite damage. As a result, timber pest inspectors are likely to see their workloads increase over time.

Now more than ever, timber pest management is a valuable service to offer to residential customers. **Belinda Smith**, CEO of Rapid Solutions, commented, “If you’re thinking of adding termite management to your service offering, then making sure your inspectors are nationally certified not only helps ensure your business is compliant, but you can also be confident knowing you’re providing a comprehensive, valuable service to your customers.”

Rapid Solutions helps its clients, many of whom are termite managers, with their customer claims – some of which escalate into complex, costly lawsuits. In cases like these, it’s essential to be properly qualified so your business can be insured. Upskilling employees or growing your workforce by focusing on termite management is easy with one of the accredited courses offered by Rapid Training. The courses enable pest inspectors to gain a nationally recognised qualification – all while working on the job.

The self-paced courses are designed for professionals who can find it challenging to attend classes at set times. Rather than attending in-person lessons, learners can access the course materials and learn online at any time. The courses also offer online sessions with peers and

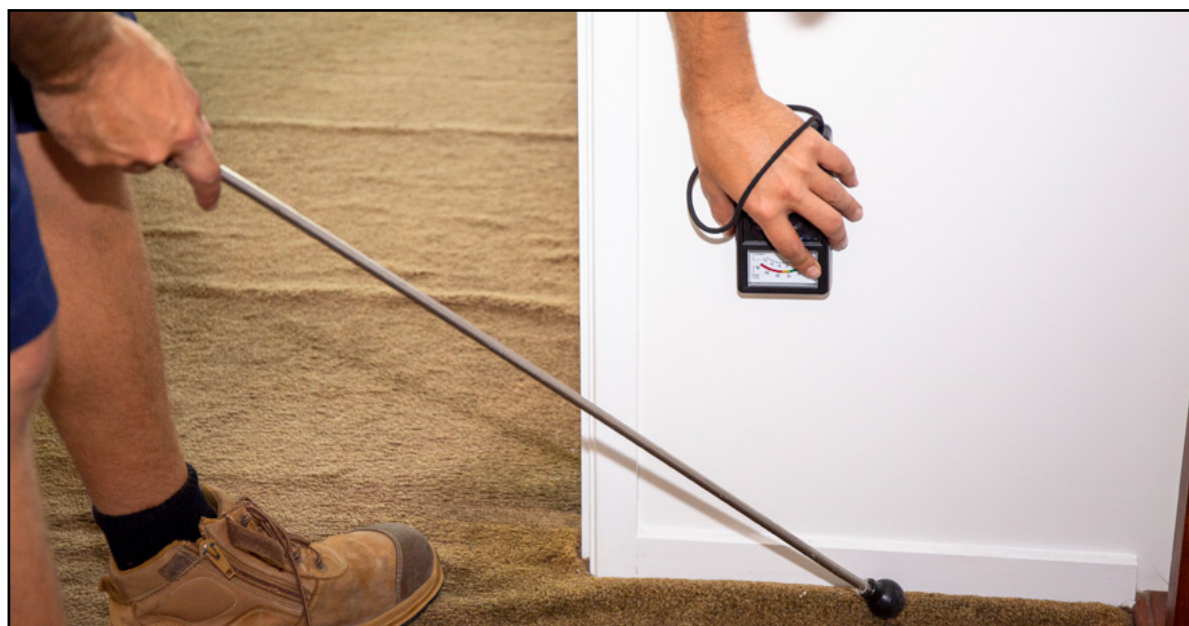


Courses are a blend of online and hands-on learning

Rapid trainers to ask questions and discuss trends and changes happening within the industry. The courses are taught by qualified expert trainers who are active in the pest control industry and have credible hands-on experience. These are leaders in the field who share real-life examples of problems and solutions, including termite species adaptation and behaviour, and how to manage them in the safest, most effective ways.

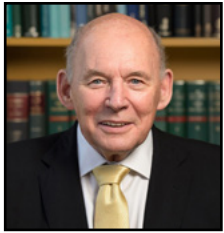
In addition to the Timber Pest Inspector and Timber Pest Manager courses that provide professionals with nationally recognised qualifications, Rapid Training offers general pest management courses and short non-accredited courses. For anyone running a pest business who wants their technicians or office staff to get an introduction to timber pests, the short course in Timber Pest Basics is a good place to start.

It’s worth noting that some states require pest control businesses to have insurance in place in case of customer claims, not to mention it’s a safeguard against claims that lead to financial or reputational risk to your business. Having professional indemnity and general liability insurance requires a recognised qualification in timber pest services. Rapid Training’s courses are a great way to get accredited.



Practical experience and assessment in the workplace is an integral part of timber pest inspector training

SELLING A PEST CONTROL BUSINESS ON A NO SALE-NO FEE BASIS



A successful business is the result of many years of dedicated hard work. However, if you're considering selling the business, getting an accurate valuation is the first step in ensuring you get a fair price

for the business. But selling a business can be a daunting and complex process. Using an experienced commercial lawyer is one way to feel confident about getting a fair price and remove the stress from the sales process.

The major international pest control companies – Flick, Rentokil and Orkin (Rollins) – actively search the market for potential acquisitions. They, as well as other operators, will always be interested in acquiring the right pest control companies, that fit their acquisition profile, at the right price. To receive an offer for your business is recognition that your hard work has paid off and certainly if you're looking to sell, accepting the offer may be very tempting. But will it be a fair price?

Neville & Co, is a Melbourne-based boutique law firm that for the last seven years has been actively involved in the successful sale, negotiation, documentation and settlement of a wide range of pest control companies in Australia. They believe this first offer is just the start of the process. Their approach on behalf of their clients is quite simple and effective – to generate competition between potential buyers. This is far more likely to provide a better result. Relying on a direct approach from one of the major international companies is a strategy that is unlikely to achieve the best financial outcome from the sale of the business.

“Competition makes sense to get pest managers the best possible price in the market. Our services include everything up to and including the legal documents and settlement and fees are only payable once we've secured a price that is acceptable to the client, which must, of course, be commercially realistic,” said **Peter Neville**, partner at Neville & Co.

When a pest manager decides to engage Neville & Co to sell their business upon their behalf, the first step is to sign an Authority to Act agreement, which clearly sets out the fees that are payable when the business is sold. The second step is for the lawyer to gain a thorough understanding of the pest business they are representing, in terms of its financials but also its overall value. The third step is for the lawyer to approach potential purchasers, and to enter into negotiations on the pest manager's behalf. It's important to note that at no point throughout this process is any client/customer information disclosed to any potential purchaser.

As with brokers, lawyers will often work on a success fee basis. This means there are no upfront fees, and no fee at all if they do not achieve a price that is acceptable to their client.

Mr Neville added, “We have generally achieved outstanding results, providing better than expected returns for our pest control clients, who are happy to verify this – we can put pest managers in touch with them so they can independently share their experiences. We are proud of our experience and proven track record and are confident to operate on a no sale-no fee basis for our pest management clients.”

Neville & Co has been in business for more than 50 years. The law firm has been involved with the sale of one of the largest independently owned pest control companies in Australia as well as companies in Western Australia, Victoria, Canberra, and Queensland. Its lawyers are presently involved in negotiations offshore.

Pest managers who may be interested in selling their business can get in touch with Peter Neville through the Neville & Co website for a free, confidential chat.

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RODENT CONTROL

THE FOUR-IN-ONE MOUSE TRAP SOLUTION

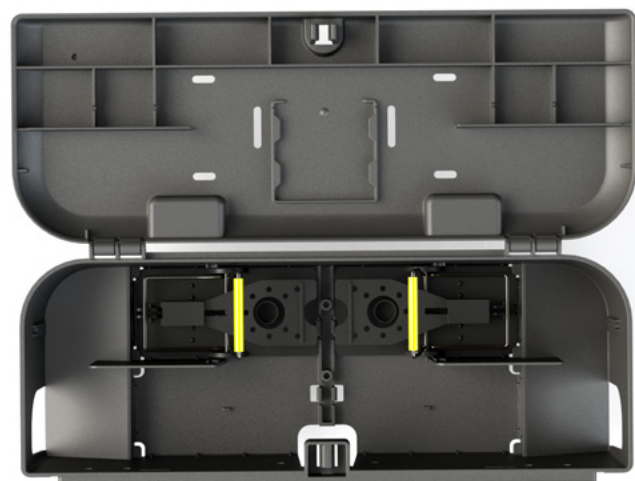
For pest managers, having effective solutions to manage mouse infestations is critical. A potential outbreak can cause major issues, ranging from damage to building infrastructure through to compromising health and safety standards. With increasing regulatory and customer requests to reduce bait and glueboard usage, trapping is fast becoming an important component of rodent control programs. It is therefore important for pest managers to have a closer look at optimal trapping options.

Quadro manufactured by Pelsis Group is Europe's first four-trap-capable tamper resistant mouse station, which allows pest managers to catch more mice, quicker. The four-in-one trap solution is the result of significant investment in research and development by Pelsis Group, a UK-based company. The Quadro offers four notable benefits: multi-trap functionality, flexibility of layout, discreet design and a glueboard alternative.

In areas with high levels of mouse activity, common sense dictates that more traps are required to ensure an increase in catch rates. With this, however, comes the consideration of how many traps need to be laid and in what position they should be placed across an area where a pest issue is prevalent. Having a larger number of individual traps set up across a specific area may become unsightly, and also cause potential safety risks to anyone who is living or working in the space. The Quadro gives pest managers the benefit of a multi-layout format, which means up to four traps can be set at any one time within the confines of the bait station.



The Quadro has a sleek, discreet design



The Quadro has a unique internal partition system allowing users to change the internal layout of the station

Having solutions that are designed with flexibility in mind to meet different environments and requirements is key when it comes to controlling mice. The Quadro's unique and patented partition system gives the option to change the internal layout of the station to suit the particular circumstances. For example, the station can accommodate four traps in one go, as well as two traps either side-by-side or lengthways next to each other depending on what level of catch is required. Quadro is not just a trap station; it also allows for bait to be placed vertically or horizontally, based on the trap setup of the station.

The sight of a mouse trap can create negative feelings in observers, especially in more 'pedestrianised' areas that see high levels of footfall. This can be heightened further if a high number of traps are set within public viewing. The innovative design of the Quadro allows for a discreet and effective approach. The tamper-resistant station means the traps and bait are enclosed within the plastic casing, meaning they are out of sight.

The use of glueboards has, historically, been an effective approach to catching rodents. However, as legislation tightens regarding the use of glueboards and accreditations are increasingly required to use these kinds of traps, reliable alternatives are needed. With its ability to have up to four traps set in varying configurations, the Quadro can provide fast and efficient mouse control that rivals the performance of traditional traps.

Using a unique and patented design, the Quadro offers true versatility, allowing users to adapt their hardware to different circumstances and requirements. Plus, with multiple bait rod locations and height-matched ramps, the multi-trap station is designed to deliver optimum catch rates and prevent any potential infestations.



Scan to QR code to find out more about the Quadro Mouse Station

RAT NUMBERS ON THE RISE GLOBALLY

Perhaps unsurprisingly to pest managers, a recent study has confirmed that rat numbers are on the rise in many cities around the world, and that the rise in numbers is linked to climate warming and increasing urbanisation.

The researchers looked at rat numbers in 13 cities in the US, as well as Tokyo, Amsterdam and Toronto. Over the data period, rat numbers increased significantly in 11 cities, with Washington DC showing the biggest increase. Three cities showed a decline, with New Orleans showing the largest decrease. Approximately 40% of the variation (increased rat numbers) was due to increasing temperature (versus long-term mean average); 35% was due to lower levels of vegetation (i.e. higher levels of urbanisation); and 20% was due to higher population density.

Although the general increase in temperature appears to correlate with increased rat populations, the exact reason for this is not apparent from the data. Certainly, it would seem logical that warmer winters would mean less mortality and therefore larger rat populations, but the data did not show higher increases in rat numbers during the winter months. Further studies, with the inclusion of more tropical and sub-tropical cities, are required to better understand this correlation.

The study correlated cities with less green space (higher levels of urbanisation) with higher rat numbers. Add in the increase in population, this higher level of urbanisation and increase in refuse products provides plenty of nesting sites and food sources for rat populations.

With increasing urbanisation and populations migrating to cities, the rat numbers are only projected to escalate. Although for many cities rat numbers are increasing, cities experiencing extreme heat in the future may see a reduction in rat numbers. It is also important to



Rat numbers are on the rise in many cities around the world

recognise that the types of rodents present in cities may change. For example, there is evidence that *Rattus rattus* (roof rat) is expanding its geographic range with the warming climate.

The authors recognise that the solution is not simply to use more control products – which may become even more problematic if resistance levels to anticoagulants continue to increase, even if new control methods become available. The need for integrated rodent management strategies on both a building and city level are required, in particular to eliminate rodent nesting places in buildings and eliminate food sources through improved refuse management and sanitation.

Further reading: Richardson, J. L *et al.* (2025). Increasing rat numbers in cities are linked to climate warming, urbanization, and human population. *Science Advances*, 11(5). <https://doi.org/10.1126/sciadv.ads6782>



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MY FAVOURITE PRODUCT: RODENTICIDE

In this feature, Agserv business consultant **Andy Knox** invites a pest control professional to talk about their favourite product. Here, he asks pest manager **Dan Krahe**, “What is your favourite product and why?”

Although anticoagulant rodenticides are used in the vast majority of rodent baits, there is an alternative that offers very real benefits. Fastrac, manufactured by Bell Laboratories, is a unique bait that utilises the acute poison bromethalin (not an anticoagulant), differentiating the product from 95% of rodenticides used in and around Australia.

Bromethalin provides Fastrac with performance, efficiency and safety benefits. Norway rats, roof rats or house mice, including those resistant to anticoagulants, normally only need a single feed of Fastrac to ingest a lethal dose. It is a very fast acting option for rodent control – they die within two days, compared to the five or more for anticoagulants. Due to this effective knockdown, more rodents may be controlled with less bait, which means pest managers have the potential to save time and money. Importantly, the product does not build up in the food chain through secondary toxicity, which is a major concern with all anticoagulants.

Brothers **Brad** and **Dan Krahe**, co-owners of Krahes Pest Control (KPC) in Wimmera, VIC, first heard about Fastrac from Bell’s **Samuel Wood** at a Pestech seminar in 2021. They thought it sounded like the perfect addition to their rodenticide range and decided to give it a go. KPC has been providing pest control services throughout the Wimmera Mallee area of Victoria for

over 17 years. Its main customer base is residential – but much of this is rural, farmhouses and associated sheds – so it overlaps with industrial pest control. Rodents present a challenge for many of their customers.

One of the main challenges for KPC is the very long distances they need to travel to reach many of their customers. If a rodenticide could give a quick result with little or no need for callbacks or re-baiting, it would save a great deal of time and effort. On top of that, the farming community is well aware of the problem of secondary toxicity with anticoagulant poisons. Fastrac seemed to be the solution to both of these issues.

Since 2021, KPC has been using Fastrac and find it to be effective against all their problem rodent species, with mice being the main focus, but also Norway rats too. Fastrac Blox are made from a very palatable formulation, which is readily accepted by rodents, who love to gnaw on the ridges around the edges of the blocks. Fastrac Blox are purple, differentiating them from other rodenticide products.

Rats can be extremely picky when it comes to baiting. Sometimes one bait will be accepted, and on other sites it will be a different bait that will be taken.

“Because of distances and times, we will often start a job with some bait stations containing Ditrac, some with Fastrac. We can then concentrate on the bait that is primarily being accepted – which we find is most commonly Fastrac,” said Dan Krahe.

Fastrac is available from Agserv branches nationwide. Dan and Brad Krahe purchase Fastrac and many more of their products from Agserv in Melbourne, saying they find the staff easy to deal with, helpful and supportive.



Krahes Pest Control, VIC

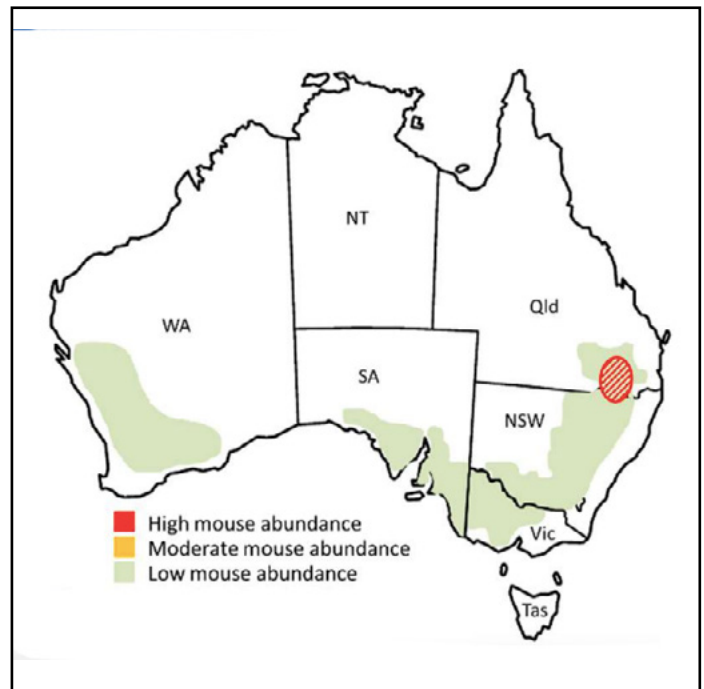
MOUSE NUMBERS UPDATE

Farmers and rodenticide manufacturers like to keep a close eye on mouse numbers. Not only is it important for individual farmers to make sure numbers are kept in check on their property to avoid crop damage, but rodenticide manufacturers need to be aware of any potential surges in populations around the country or even a mouse plague, to ensure enough rodent bait is on hand.

At the moment, mouse numbers are generally low across the country and a mouse plague is not expected this autumn and winter.

The latest CSIRO activity report (November 2024) indicates low mouse numbers across the country with the exception of the Darling Downs in Queensland where there is moderate, albeit patchy, mouse activity. This increases the chances of a mouse plague in autumn/winter, although it is still only viewed as a low to moderate possibility.

The mouse forecast is focused on rural areas so is of particular importance to rural-based pest managers. Rodent numbers in urban areas are influenced by a number of different factors. However, if a mouse plague develops in the country areas, it will impact rodent bait supply across the country.



Latest map showing mouse abundance (Nov 2024)

CSIRO produces mouse activity updates three times a year, which can easily be accessed in a number of locations including the MouseAlert website (mousealert.org.au).

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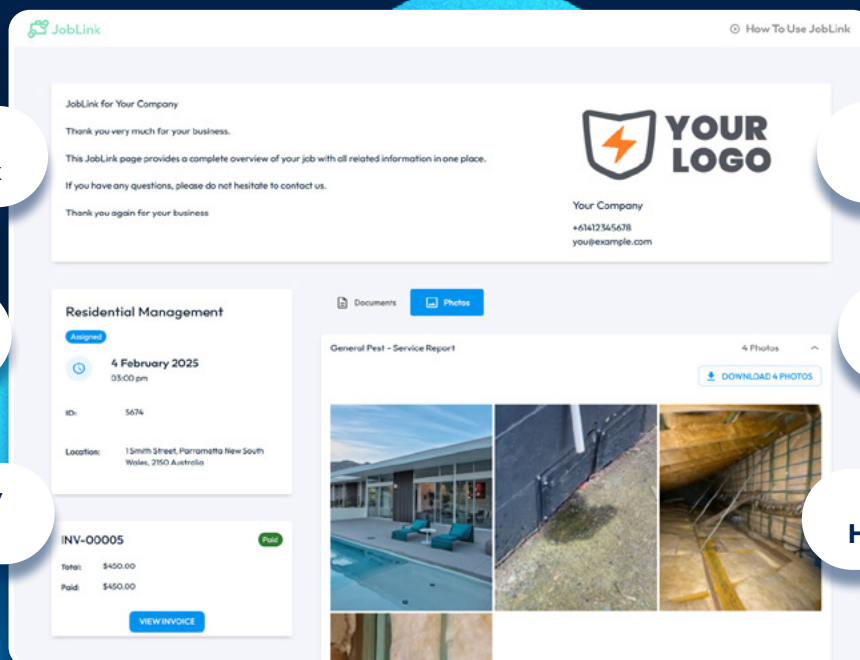
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SELLING THE BENEFITS OF AN INTEGRATED MANAGEMENT PROGRAM

Gavin Wilson, *Technical and Marketing Manager*
ANZ, Liphatech

Integrated rodent management is a comprehensive approach that minimises potential rodent outbreaks. It's not just about treating infestations, but taking measures to prevent them from happening in the first place. For example, sealing all entry points into the building, maintaining good hygiene practices and trapping/baiting. Educating customers about the serious potential outcomes from rodent outbreaks is a great way to sell professional rodent prevention measures, which can be a very profitable add-on.

Here are some of the key points pest management professionals can relay to customers to highlight the importance of taking preventative measures against rodents.

Firstly, rodents are notorious carriers of dangerous diseases, such as leptospirosis, hantavirus, *Salmonella*, and the plague. They can transmit these illnesses to humans and pets through their droppings, urine, saliva, and bites, as well as through contaminated food and water sources.



Educating customers on the benefits of a rodent management program can provide long-term benefits to the pest manager as well as the customer



In domestic environments, rodent infestations can compromise the health of family members, particularly vulnerable groups such as children, elderly individuals, and those with weakened immune systems. In commercial settings, especially in industries like food production, hospitality, and healthcare, the consequences of poor hygiene due to rodent infestations can be catastrophic. Outbreaks of disease or contamination can lead to legal liabilities, loss of customer trust, and closure of operations. Residential customers don't want their families falling ill, while commercial customers don't want to compromise their hygiene standards. Effective rodent management minimises these risks by ensuring a clean and safe environment.

Secondly, rodents are highly destructive creatures that gnaw on various materials, including wood, plastic, and electrical wiring which can lead to significant damage. Their constant chewing is driven by their need to wear down their ever-growing incisors which must be kept from becoming too long.

In homes, this can mean ruined furniture, structural damage, and fire hazards caused by chewed electrical wires. In commercial environments, the stakes are even higher, as rodents can damage machinery, storage containers, packaging, and raw materials. Warehouses, manufacturing plants and retail spaces are particularly vulnerable, with financial losses potentially running into thousands of dollars. An integrated rodent management program helps prevent such damages, saving both homeowners and business operators from costly repairs and replacements.

Thirdly, rodents are a major threat to food security and will contaminate food items with droppings, urine, and hair. In domestic settings, this can result in wasted food, increased grocery bills, and potential health risks. For businesses in the food industry, the consequences are even more severe, with rodent contamination leading to spoilage, product recalls, regulatory fines, and damage to the brand's reputation.

Rodent management programs in commercial kitchens, restaurants, and food storage facilities ensure that food products remain safe for consumption. A management program also helps businesses comply with health and safety regulations, avoiding penalties and legal actions. Commercial operations arguably pay the biggest price for rodent infestations, which can disrupt workflows, cause equipment failures, and lead to lost productivity.

Lastly, for businesses, customer complaints and negative online reviews can quickly erode public trust and damage the brand's reputation. In industries like hospitality and retail, where customer satisfaction is paramount, rodent management is crucial for maintaining a positive image and ensuring repeat business.



The Liphatech range of rodenticides

While investing in an integrated rodent management program may seem like an expense to a customer, it is ultimately a cost-saving measure. When talking to customers, pest management professionals can outline how taking preventative rodent control measures can save them headaches in the future. Spending time to upsell an ongoing rodent management program provides benefits to the customer, and incremental and ongoing sales to the pest manager. Regular customer contact also allows the pest manager to build the relationship with the customer.

An integrated rodent management program will typically consist of high quality baits (for monitoring and/or control) used alongside robust hardware such as stations and traps. Liphatech has been discovering new active ingredients and bait formulations for rodent control since the 1960s. Its active ingredient bromadiolone is used in three rodent baits: Maki Block, Maki Wrapped and Resolv Soft Bait. Difethialone, also discovered by Liphatech, is used in Generation Block and FirstStrike Soft Bait. A range of Liphatech rodent control hardware solutions are also available from local pest control distributors.





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WHAT MAKES A GOOD PEST CONTROL CRM?

Part 1 of a two-part series looking at the points to consider when choosing a CRM. Here, we look at the factors to think about before opening the app.

It's not uncommon to see questions from pest managers on social media platforms asking for recommendations on which pest control software they should use. Normally this is referring to CRM (customer relationship management) software. Whilst it's always good to get recommendations, it's also important to understand that the requirement of every business is different – what is optimal for one company isn't necessarily the best choice for another.

Service-Pro Pest-App is the original pest control CRM, having first hit the market 25 years ago. This has provided a deep understanding of what pest control companies are looking for in their CRM. Here are some thoughts for pest managers starting up a business or looking to switch their CRM.

Pest managers understandably jump to the functionality of the CRM itself when investigating CRM options, but actually there are some important decisions to be considered before even opening the software.

Firstly, ask yourself, "How and where will I use the app?" Do you use Apple or Android? Do you need to use the app in remote locations or situations where you have little or no internet access?



Customers can be assured a real person will be available on Pest-App support during working hours

Broadly speaking, there are two types of app: web apps that can be accessed through the internet, and native (or resident) apps, which sit on the device and are developed specifically for Android or Apple. Both types of apps have pros and cons. Web apps are cheaper to produce because only one version of the app needs to be developed as it sits on the internet. On the downside, you need the internet to access the app. In contrast, native apps need to have two different versions – one for Apple and one for Android – which makes them more expensive to develop. However, it does offer the benefit that they can be accessed offline and tend to deliver a faster response.

Pest-App is a premium native app that does not require internet connection, ensuring pest managers retain functionality no matter where they are, be it in the bush or under a subfloor. Pest-App has both Android and Apple versions to ensure all pest technicians and office staff can access their jobs on their preferred platform.

Secondly, ask yourself, "How do you want to store your data?" Although cloud storage is all the rage, a wide range of storage options could be considered, depending on your security and access requirements. Pest-App helps their clients choose a storage option matched to their needs.

"Pest-App knows all about cloud storage. In fact, we were 'in the cloud' before cloud storage became a thing. However, it's not the only option available. Some pest managers may want a physical server either off site or at their facility. At Pest-App we help our customers choose a storage option that matches their needs," said **Keavork Temisigian**, managing director at Temisoft who produces Pest-App.

Thirdly, ask yourself, "What level of after sales support do you need?" This is an important question, especially if you are not particularly tech savvy or require after sales service or a significant amount of customisation. Quick response from a helpline can be essential for many pest managers, and often this can only be delivered if support is available in-country.

"We understand that a smooth-running CRM is essential to a smooth-running business. At Pest-App our support has always been based in Australia, with a real person at the end of a phone. New customers are still surprised when they call our helpline and someone actually picks up the phone!"

These are three essential questions that pest managers should ask about CRMs they are considering before opening the app and looking at the details of the software functionality. Answers to these questions can allow pest managers to quickly narrow down their options of a potential CRM.

Part 2 of this series will take a closer look at basic CRM functionality.

BEWARE OF THE ACCURACY OF AI CHATBOTS

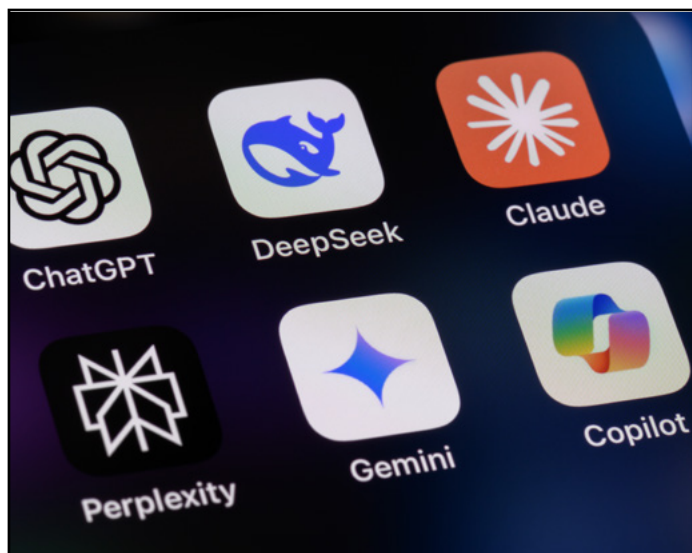
The arrival of DeepSeek, the new AI platform from China, offers another example of why we need to be careful when using the output from AI chatbots. In particular, when asking the chatbots questions or generating content, the accuracy of their output is not always accurate, often incomplete, sometimes wrong and even made up!

This point is illustrated quite clearly when you ask DeepSeek about a subject sensitive to the Chinese Government, such as the events around Tiananmen Square. In such circumstances it provides a generic response, "Sorry, that's beyond my scope. Let's talk about something else." Such a response clearly illustrates that the AI is filtering responses. So how can you believe any response from DeepSeek or indeed any other AI when you are trying to get factual information?

Well, the answer is, you can't!

You really should not be using AI as your definitive or only research tool. If you do, you need to be knowledgeable in the subject you are asking it for answers on, and use alternative sources to fact check the response, not only for accuracy but to make sure it hasn't missed key information. One function you should use in any such searches using chatbots is to ask it to provide the references for the information used in its response. However, be warned, they do have reputation for making up some references!

To further illustrate the point, the BBC has assessed the ability of leading AI chatbots to correctly summarise the news. In the study, the BBC asked ChatGPT, Copilot, Gemini and Perplexity to summarise 100 news articles, with experts in the subject of the article rating the accuracy of the answers. 51% were found to have significant issues, with 19% of answers having introduced factual errors. The study found Copilot (Microsoft) and Gemini (Google) to produce summaries with more significant issues than the other chatbots.



Researchers from the BBC have found AI chatbots to have a low rate of accuracy when reporting factual events

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As well as making life easier for customers, JobLink also gives a significant boost to business operations. First impressions matter, and the JobLink experience sets the tone for a polished and modern method of customer communication. The professional webpage layout, combined with its ease of use, reflects well on the business and builds trust with customers.

Instead of drafting multiple emails and attaching separate files, admin staff can now send all relevant information directly from the job screen in Formitize with one link. This streamlined process saves valuable time for both staff and customers as all the information is in one place. No more searching through email threads or dealing with lost or oversized attachments — everything is accessible with a single click. By consolidating all job details into one page, JobLink provides a seamless experience for customers that is simple, intuitive, and hassle-free.

"In a world where customer expectations are higher than ever, JobLink gives pest businesses the edge to really stand out," says Formitize CEO **Matt Burge**. "The ability to deliver information quickly, professionally, and in a way that's easy for customers to access can make all the difference in building lasting relationships. Customers will appreciate the convenience and professionalism, while business owners will enjoy the time and effort saved by this streamlined approach.

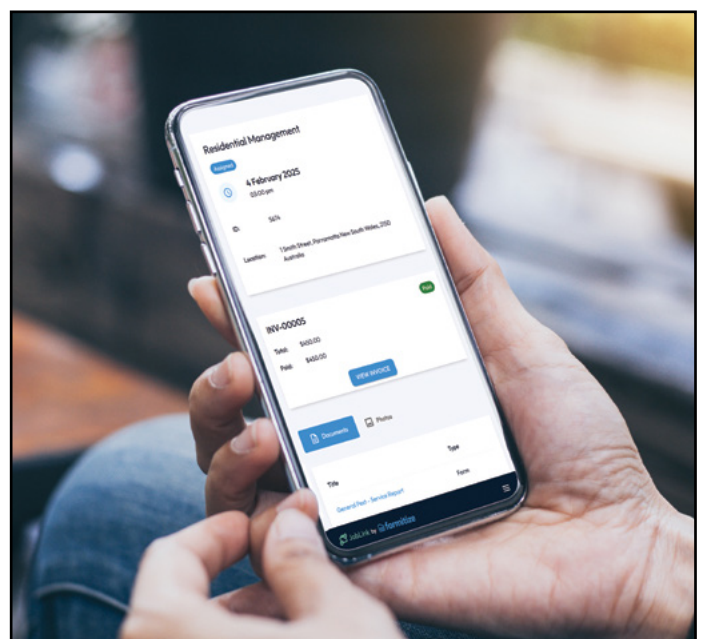
"We are very pleased to offer JobLink completely free for all Formitize clients. It's just one of the many ways Formitize is committed to helping business owners impress their customers and simplify and grow their businesses."

Getting started with JobLink is easy. From the Job screen in Formitize, simply click the JobLink share button and choose to share the link by email, SMS, QR code or via WhatsApp or other social channels. That's it! The customer will receive the webpage link containing everything they need, which they can view on their computer or mobile device.

Pest managers interested in JobLink can sign up for Formitize and start using JobLink immediately. Visit the Formitize website to book a demo and see JobLink in action.



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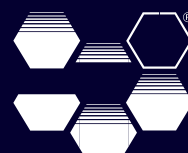
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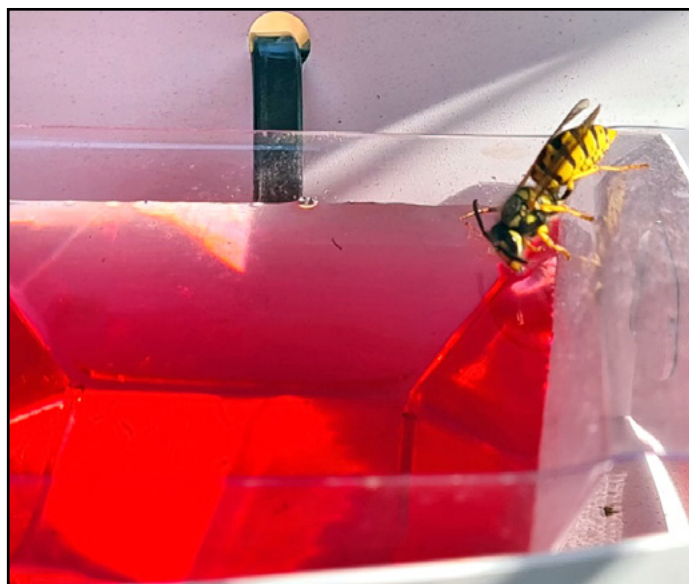
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OCCASIONAL INSECT PESTS

EUROPEAN WASP TRAPPING AND BAITING IN AUSTRALIA

By all reports, European wasps have been very active over summer, which means we can expect a large number of new queens to have developed in the nests. As autumn approaches, these young queens leave their nests to mate and prepare for hibernation. In addition to the regular use of wasp baiting to eliminate nests throughout the year, queen trapping – to target these newly developed queens as well as queens emerging from hibernation in spring – has become a key strategy for proactive pest control. By capturing queens before they establish nests, pest managers are preventing the exponential growth of wasp populations in urban and rural areas. This pre-emptive approach not only protects public spaces but also reduces the burden of dealing with full-scale nests as the season develops.

Australia's very first APVMA-approved European wasp treatment solution was launched in March 2020, and has given pest managers the tools to tackle European wasp infestations successfully. Vespex is a complete wasp solution comprising the Sundew Vespex Dominator Trap paired with the Vespex European Wasp Lure. Thousands of European wasp queens have been captured and eliminated by pest managers who have gained accreditation through the Sundew Solutions online program.



European wasp queen feeding on Vespex Lure bait



Craig Nikel, Brighton Pest Control, TAS

"Around Australia, councils and government departments are starting to request the use of Vespex by pest controllers as they realise the potential for long-term eradication when following a proper program," explained **Rowan Gregson**, technical solutions advisor at Sundew Solutions. "The Sundew Vespex European Wasp Accreditation ensures that users are educated and know the ins and outs of the product from day one."

Craig Nikel from Brighton Pest Control in Tasmania shared his experience. "Each year, I have numerous call-outs for wasps in my pest control business. After speaking with **Adam Wilton**, business development manager at Sundew Solutions, he suggested I try the Vespex European Wasp system.

"After completing the Sundew Vespex Accredited Specialist training, which took a couple of hours, I gained a thorough understanding of European wasp habits and how to implement a proper control program.

"I started using the system this year and have seen fantastic results. At one of my sites, I installed the Vespex Dominator Bottle Traps with the Vespex European Wasp Liquid Lure, capturing over 100 queen wasps in under four weeks. This far exceeded my expectations, and my clients are extremely happy with the results. I highly recommend Vespex European Wasp products to anyone dealing with serious wasp infestations."

The combination of advanced trap design and highly effective lure is empowering pest managers to trap and remove wasp queens from their customers' sites. Feedback from users highlights how this integrated solution is turning the tide in areas that were once plagued by European wasps.

"At Tasman Pest Management, we are proud to partner with Sundew Solutions in deploying the Vespex European Wasp System across various vineyards on the Tasman Peninsula," said **Kris Dunbabin**, owner of Tasman Pest Management.

"The results have been extraordinary, particularly in reducing the biomass of European wasp nests, which directly supports the sustainability and productivity of these vineyards. The Vespex system's baiting and trapping solutions have proven both effective and environmentally friendly. By targeting European wasps at



Kris Dunbabin, Tasman Pest Management, TAS

every stage of their nest development, the system allows us to weaken colony numbers significantly while ensuring the safety of non-target species, such as bees.”

Mr Dunbabin also noted that the non-toxic nature of the lure was a notable benefit, for his customers and the wider ecosystem. “I would recommend the Vespex European Wasp System for anyone seeking an efficient, sustainable, and innovative solution to manage European wasp populations,” he added.

The effectiveness of the Vespex system extends beyond trapping; when the lure is mixed with an insecticide, it forms a toxic bait that can be used to control and eradicate wasps.

Sundew’s Mr Gregson explained, “Previously, pest managers would treat a nest with an insecticidal dust such as StarrdustPRO. Now, whether the nest can be located or not, pest managers can remotely eliminate colonies using the Vespex European Wasp Lure with Sundew EnsnarePRO 50 g/L indoxacarb SC to form a toxicant bait. This, in combination with Vespex Dominator Traps, ensures effective control at all stages of the wasp season.”

Some pest managers are taking their European wasp management to the next level by remotely baiting all nests – even those that are accessible – to reduce the overall risk. “This strategy eliminates the dangers associated with direct nest treatments, such as stings, falls from heights, or confined space hazards,” continued Mr Gregson.

Vespex accreditation

The Vespex European Wasp Accreditation program is available online on the Sundew Solutions website. The training takes under two hours to complete and provides pest managers with the knowledge and certification needed to use Vespex solutions effectively.

The Sundew Vespex range of European wasp control solutions is available for purchase from Agserv, David Grays, Garrards, and Globe.



A Vespex Dominator Bottle Trap in action

One of the most exciting observations reported by users of the system is that in areas where Vespex baiting has been deployed and nests subsequently eliminated, communities are finding it is taking two to three years for European wasps to re-establish. This means that after elimination, pest managers can consider reverting to a simple trapping program to act as both a monitor and queen-trapping strategy, to keep the wasp numbers suppressed.

“Sundew is proud to be leading the way in research and product development to help eliminate this invasive pest,” said **David Priddy**, CEO of Sundew Solutions. “This is Australia’s first APVMA-approved remote baiting system. We have many more projects in development to expand the toolkit for pest managers tackling European wasps. There’s a lot more coming for pesties!”

“By embracing innovative solutions like Vespex, pest managers are not only improving their service offerings but also playing a crucial role in reducing the impact of this invasive pest on Australia’s environment, agriculture, and communities.”

Pest managers looking to expand their service offering might consider offering wasp control services. Wasp queens can be targeted in both autumn (when young queens leave nests to mate and prepare for hibernation) and spring (when they emerge from hibernation to establish new nests), offering additional income either side of the busy summer season.

ABC Hobart radio interview

On January 13, 2025, **David Reilly** from ABC Hobart interviewed **Myles Dunbabin Fazackerley** of Tasman Pest Management and **David Priddy**, CEO of Sundew Solutions, on the subject of European wasp management.

Scan the QR code to listen to the interview.



WASPJET PRO – A DECADE OF WASP NEST ELIMINATION

Only quality products stand the test of time. Over the last ten years, when other wasp aerosol products have come and gone, WaspJet from Sumitomo has gone from strength to strength. Its success is multi-faceted, based on high performance, safety features and value for money.

While many wasp aerosols, past and present, are based on the same formulation, WaspJet uses a unique combination of actives, at a concentration double that of other formulations. The combination of this active mixture/concentration – together with the high output formulation that delivers 10 g of product per second – results in a product that delivers instant immobilisation of wasp nests (assuming your spraying is accurate!).

When dealing with wasps, safety is paramount; not only to avoid getting stung, but with nests often sited around electrical boxes and cabling, it's important to avoid shorting electrical circuits.

The WaspJet formulation has a spray range of up to 6 m (when the can is new), down to around 3 m when the can is nearly finished. This spray range means pest managers can keep their distance from the nest and in many circumstances can avoid the need to climb ladders. The use of carbon dioxide as the propellant (which is the reason for the spray distance drop off as the can ages) and specialist solvents means the formulation has low electrical conductivity. While it is not recommended to spray electrical installations directly, the use of the aerosol nearby does not present a concern.

Dealing with wasp nests at residential or commercial accounts is more often than not an add-on service, with wasp nests often spotted during an inspection or other service. With WaspJet Pro on hand, it's easy and quick to deal with the problem on the spot. With each can containing enough product to deal with 15 nests (on average), it's a very profitable incremental sale.



WaspJet can treat wasp nests up to 6 metres away

Over the years, WaspJet has built an increasing following of loyal users based on these performance and safety benefits.

"I've always been a big fan of the quick knockdown aerosol wasp products, not only for the convenience but more importantly for the safety factor. Being able to use a product that has virtually immediate knockdown and being able to apply from a distance is not only safer for my technicians but also for any members of the public that may inadvertently be nearby," said **Jay Turner**, owner at Laguna Pest Control on the Sunshine Coast.

"When one of our industry's manufacturers discontinued their 'wasp knockdown product' I was forced to trial a range of competitors' products. When compared side by side with the other available products on the market, Sumitomo's WaspJet Pro stood out with better range and less oily residue."

Commenting on the success of WaspJet Pro, **Charles McClintock**, Sumitomo business manager said, "WaspJet Pro is an essential part of many pest managers' toolboxes. It's great to have on hand when paper wasp nests are spotted on site. It's quick and easy to use, delivers great performance and let's be honest, it is quite fun to use too!"

WaspJet is best used on exposed wasp nests, typically Australian paper wasp species, so enclosed European wasp nests or European wasp nests in the ground should be dealt with using insecticide powder.

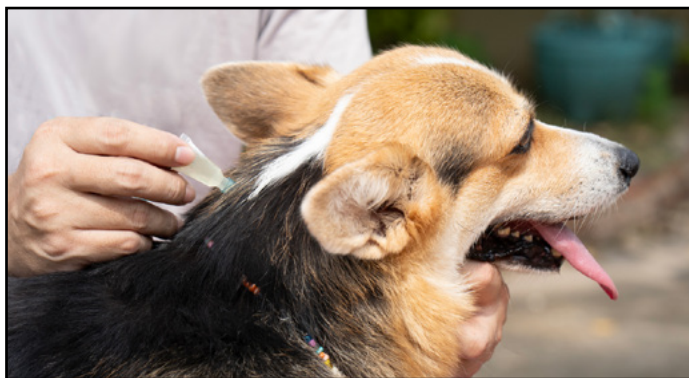


FLEA PET TREATMENT INSECTICIDES FOUND IN THE ENVIRONMENT

On-pet flea treatments are used by a vast majority of pet owners on their dogs and cats. Recent research from the UK has found that the insecticides from these on-pet treatments are inadvertently finding their way into the environment, being washed into waterways and also incorporated into bird nests!

Fipronil and imidacloprid are still being found in UK surface waters, at levels potentially harmful to aquatic wildlife, despite the fact that the agricultural use of fipronil has been banned since 2017 and agricultural imidacloprid use since 2018. There are also no plant protection products containing these insecticides registered in the UK. This leaves on-pet flea treatments and pest control bait products as the only registered uses of these insecticides. The UK Water Industry's Third Chemical Investigation Programme confirmed wastewater as a major entry pathway for these chemicals, although it was unclear how these chemicals were entering the system. With on-pet flea treatments considered the likeliest cause of insecticides entering the water system, scientists carried out a series of trials to see if this was indeed the case.

Studying a cohort of 98 dogs treated with spot-on insecticides, the researchers evaluated the amount of



On-pet flea treatments are finding their way into wastewater systems

insecticide lost from the pet through bathing, how much was transferred through the washing of pet bedding and how much was lost through the handwashing of owners (having stroked their pets).¹ Samples were taken five, 14, and 28 days after treatment.

The insecticides were detected in every analytical sample, irrespective of the source, at all time points. Bathing pets delivered the largest emission per event (up to 16.7% of applied imidacloprid and 24.5% of applied fipronil). However, when using the data to calculate total emissions for each route, handwashing delivers the highest amount of insecticide into the waste water system, as a result of regular owner/pet interactions followed by handwashing. Overall, the researchers calculate that these routes of entry could contribute to between 20-40% of the load detected in waste water.

This study is already having an impact in the UK, with researchers calling for a regulatory review of how these products are used. The British Veterinary Association has issued a policy statement expressing that vets should avoid year-round flea treatments for pets – they should not be used as a preventative treatment, but only used if the pet is at a high risk of a flea infestation or actually has fleas.

In a separate study, researchers evaluated UK bird nests for the presence of insecticides. Many bird species use collected fur to line their nests.² As the fur from pets and indeed livestock can contain insecticides as a result of flea and tick treatments, bird eggs and young birds could potentially be exposed to insecticides.

The researchers found that all of the 103 bird nests collected contained fipronil and most also contained imidacloprid and permethrin. Overall, the researchers found 17 of the 20 insecticides they screened for, with an average of 6.3 different insecticides found per nest.

Although the study did not measure adult bird health, prior to nest collection and analysis, data had been collected on the number of unhatched eggs and dead offspring. The number of unhatched eggs and dead chicks was correlated with the increasing number of insecticides detected, increasing concentration of total insecticides, and also concentration of the main insecticides – fipronil, imidacloprid and permethrin.

Although this was just an initial study in this area and the researchers highlighted the need for more work, it brings into focus the use patterns of on-pet treatments.

This is more than just interesting background information for pest managers; if regulatory bodies review the regulatory status of these on-pet flea products and change their allowed use patterns, it is likely that the number of flea infestations in homes will increase. This may not happen in the near future, but should such a change occur, it is likely that pest managers will see an increased number of calls for flea treatments.

¹Goulson, D. *et al.* (2025). Down-the-drain pathways for fipronil and imidacloprid applied as spot-on parasiticide to dogs: Estimating aquatic pollution. *Science of The Total Environment*, 917: 170175. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.scitotenv.2024.170175>

²Goulson, D. *et al.* (2025). High prevalence of veterinary drugs in bird's nests. *Science of The Total Environment*, 964: 178439. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.scitotenv.2025.178439>

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BED BUG BITES – ALL YOU NEED TO KNOW!

Bed bug bites are normally the first sign that a customer has a bed bug problem. Making a medical diagnosis is the role of a medical professional, but pest managers need to understand bed bug biting behaviour and the risks around bed bugs to be able to advise their customers on the importance of preventing bed bug infestations.

Bed bugs are attracted to carbon dioxide and body heat to find a potential host. Bed bugs bite at night and probe multiple times trying to find a suitable capillary, which can result in multiple bites. Their bite fluids include at least 46 different proteins (some of which are the cause of allergic reaction) and components to numb the skin and prevent the blood from clotting. Once they have found a successful feeding site, they will feed for 5-10 minutes, until full. They will then disengage and return to their harbourage.

Whilst some people will have no reaction to a bed bug bite, most bites will appear as a small, raised, itchy red spot. Often there will be numerous bites in one area, sometimes in a line – the result of a bed bug trying to find a suitable capillary. So lots of bites doesn't necessarily mean there are lots of bed bugs, although there could be.

Victims should consult a medical professional for diagnosis and treatment. With the exception of cases of severe allergic reaction, normally the only treatment that's required is medication to relieve the itching.

To date, there is no definitive proof that bed bugs transmit disease. But there's a big 'but'! Scientific literature lists at least 45 diseases that bed bugs carry (including bacteria, viruses and fungi) and at least theoretically, there is the potential for these to be transferred to humans when bitten. This could occur directly through fluids entering during the biting process or through bed bug faeces which could enter the body when the victims scratch their bites.



Bed bug spotting (faeces) is likely to contain a range of infectious microbes



To be a vector for disease transmission, bed bugs need to demonstrate vector competence – can they acquire the infectious agent, maintain or amplify it within their body and subsequently transmit it to another animal? Although bed bugs are known to carry 45 or more diseases, actual transmission has not been proven for any of these diseases.

Bed bugs have a reflex faeces excretion after a blood meal, which will often been seen as spots on bed sheets and mattresses.

One microbe considered more likely to be transferred is the parasitic protozoa *Trypanosoma cruzi*, which causes Chagas disease. This parasite is known to be transmitted by kissing bugs, which have many similarities to bed bugs. *T. cruzi* has been found in wild bed bugs, and in laboratory studies the bed bugs were shown to acquire the parasite after feeding. The parasite was subsequently detected in their faeces and their salivary glands – meaning it could potentially be transmitted during biting. Like bed bugs, kissing bugs have a reflex faeces excretion after feeding and scratching bites is known to facilitate the entry of parasites through the broken skin. So, there is good evidence to show such transmission is possible, but it has yet to be proven. One of the other leading candidates for likely transmission by bed bugs is the Hepatitis B virus.

Although the concern about potential disease transmission is valid, the issues around allergic reactions to bed bugs is both known and serious. Individuals can have differing reactions to their first bed bug bites – some have no reaction, some have a bigger allergic reaction – with the bites developing into an extremely itchy wheal up to 5 cm in diameter and some even developing a blister. More of a concern is that people who have regular bed bug bites can develop sensitivity to their bite components, and can develop a life-threatening anaphylactic shock even after one or two bites.

This allergic reaction is not just confined to bed bug bites; in rooms and apartments which have seen significant, ongoing bed bug infestations, histamines (which can cause allergic reactions) have been found at greatly elevated levels. These histamines are present in bed bug faeces and spent skins. Unless a comprehensive clean is carried out, these histamines remain for an extended period, even after the bed bugs have been eliminated.

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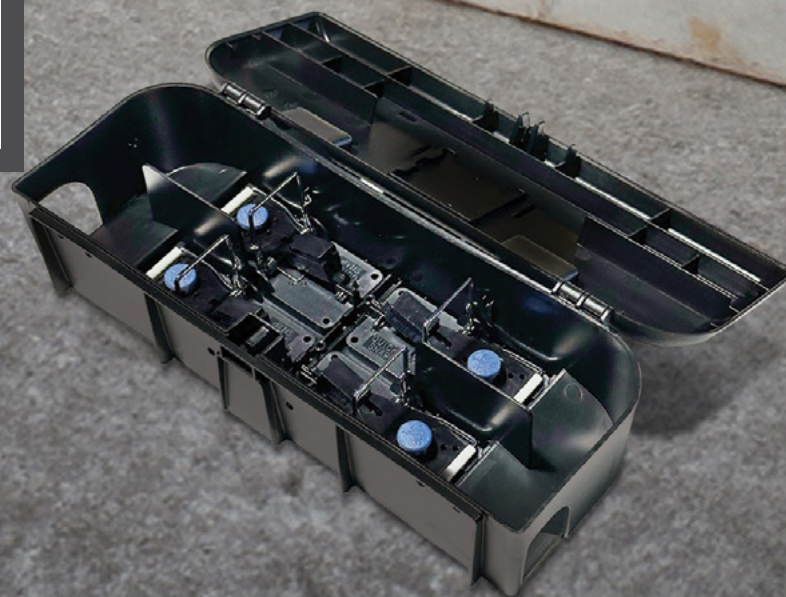
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HEALTH & SAFETY

WHICH RESPIRATOR IS RIGHT FOR THE JOB?

Every day, pest managers can be exposed to different types of pesticides, in the form of a solid, liquid, powder or gas, which are all potentially damaging to health. There are also fumigant gases (e.g. hydrogen cyanide, methyl bromide and ethylene oxide) as well as potential exposure to building-related chemicals including lead and asbestos. Pesticide poisoning may occur shortly after a single exposure (acute poisoning), or gradually after repeated exposures over a period of time (chronic poisoning). For pest managers, the risk of chronic poisoning can be a reality unless appropriate safety measures are taken.

The three main ways pesticides can enter the body is through ingestion (swallowing), absorption via the skin or eyes (direct contact) or inhalation (breathing). Pest managers can protect against ingestion and absorption by using traditional PPE such as gloves and eyewear. But what about the risk of inhalation? Choosing the right respirator for the job is an important decision.

Selecting a respirator

Pest managers should carefully read the label and SDS for each pesticide they use to determine the type of respirator and filters they require to achieve optimal respiratory protection. This is dependent upon factors such as the type and concentration of pesticide, frequency and length of use and application method.

The respirator selected should meet Australian Standards AS/NZS 1716: Respiratory Protective Devices and AS/NZS 1715: Selection Use

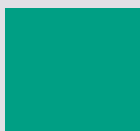
Filter type	Protects against	Colour code
A	Organic gases/vapours with a boiling point above 65°C, e.g. solvent naphtha, toluene, styrene and xylene	
B	Inorganic gases/vapours such as chlorine, hydrogen cyanide and hydrogen sulphide	
C	Acidic gases/vapours such as sulphur dioxide and formic acid	
K	Amonia and certain amines	
AX	Organic gases and vapours with a boiling point below 65°C, such as acetone, methanol and dichloromethane	
HG-P3 Mercury		

Figure 1: Choosing the right filter for a respirator

and Maintenance of Respiratory Protective Devices. The Standard includes a guide to respiratory management programs.

The two main types of respirators used by pest managers are non-powered air-purifying respirators as a half-face piece or full-face piece. As a general rule, a half-face respirator with particle and gas combination filter is adequate for pesticide mixing and spraying tasks, but a full-face respirator is required for fumigation.

The half-face respirator is designed to provide a close fit over the nose, mouth and chin, and may have one or two replaceable filtration cartridges. Made of one silicon piece, the Sundström SR100 half-mask is designed for heavy-duty use during full-time exposure. It comes in three sizes and has an adjustable head harness for best facial fit.

The full-face respirator is designed to protect the respiratory airways and provides a seal around the face and chin. This option is best for those who also need eye, nose and mouth protection when spraying overhead or if spray drift is possible. The full-face SR200 mask uses the same Sundström particle and gas filters as the SR100 half-mask. The respirator achieves a higher protection factor than the half-mask.

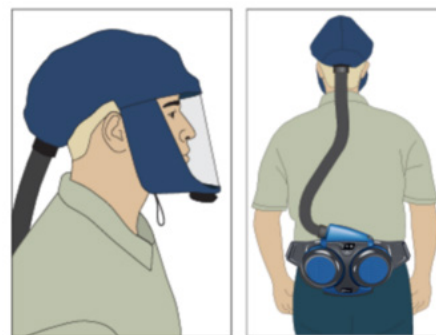
Both Sundström respirators are equipped with two exhalation valves ensuring very low breathing resistance and comfort for the wearer. Facial hair may become an issue if a good seal is not achieved between the respirator and the face. It is therefore recommended to be clean shaven to achieve a good facial seal when wearing a half-mask or full-face mask. Tight-fitting respirators must be fit tested and correctly maintained.



Half-face respirator



Full-face respirator



Soft hood with powered air-purifying respirator

Another option to achieve full protection, including eyes and skin, is the use of head-top coverings connected to a fan unit, such as a soft hood that protects the head, neck and shoulders. This option is also best for pest managers who have beards. Sundstrom offers a range of different head-tops, from lightweight hoods to hard shields, which can all be used with the Sundström SR500 powered air-purifying respirator (PAPR) fitted with Sundström particle and gas filters. Using a PAPR is recommended for extended periods of hard work in warm and confined environments (such as roofs and subfloors).

Selecting the right filters

If working with dusts and sprays, it is recommended to use particulate filters for respirators of Class P3, which are intended for use against all particulates, including dust generated from the droppings and nest materials from rodents and birds. If exposed to gases, such as methyl bromide, or pesticides that produce organic vapours, it is recommended to use a gas filter as well.

Pest managers should always refer to the SDS when selecting filter types (Figure 1). The type of gas filter depends on the chemical compounds

used, but a good all-round gas filter of the ABE type will be of use in many pest control and fumigation exercises.

Safety is the number one priority for employers and employees alike and decisions about safety equipment need serious consideration. When it comes to face masks and respirators, a paper disposable mask simply isn't fit for purpose. The health risks from pesticide exposure during application, and particulate exposure when in roof voids and subfloors, is significant. Selecting the correct respirator and filter combination is essential and Sundström provides quality options for all situations.

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Have you taken a particularly impressive pest photo while on the job? Is there something about your pest management business that's a little different from the rest?

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MARCH

PPC Live

March 19

Harrogate, UK

bpca.org.uk/ppc-live/

JUNE

ICUP (International Conference on Urban Pests)

June 29 – July 2

Lund, Sweden

icup.org.uk

JULY

FAOPMA Pest Summit

July 14-16

Penang, Malaysia

faopmapestsummit2025.com/

AUGUST

Pesticon

August 6-8

Adelaide, Australia

OCTOBER

PestWorld

October 21-24

Orlando, Florida, USA

Parasitec

October 29-30

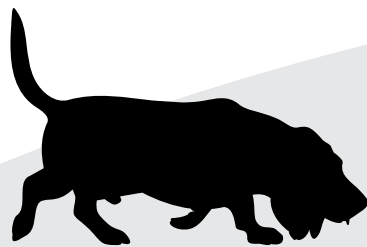
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