



Protecting hotel guests with environmentally friendly pest control

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Going green is no longer a passing trend but an important initiative for every business to consider. Today's customers are becoming more environmentally conscious consumers and looking toward companies that are both responsive to their needs and environmentally aware. Some consumers are going as far as to change their shopping behaviors to only purchase from "green" companies.

In the hospitality industry, where customer satisfaction drives the success of an establishment, hoteliers understand the importance of going green. From energy efficient lighting to limited laundry services, there are numerous ways that hoteliers have implemented green practices to provide a more enjoyable experience for their guests. One of the easiest but least often considered ways to keep hotel guests happy – without them even knowing it – is to reduce the environmental impact of a hotel's pest control program.

An important aspect of green pest control is that most of the work is done behind the scenes and won't interrupt guests' stay. Integrated Pest Management (IPM) is a holistic approach to pest management that emphasizes source reduction and considers why pests infest a facility in the first place. IPM, along with other non-chemical green pest control practices, will ensure that the lodging property remains pest-free, aesthetically pleasing, and a welcome place for guests.

The first step in going green with pest control is to implement an IPM program, if one is not already in place. In combination with other green pest practices, IPM effectively eliminates pests through an ongoing process of prevention and pest control methods. Hotel managers should review the property's current IPM program with their pest management professional and discuss implementing some of the following environmentally friendly techniques:

Fly lights and sticky boards: To keep pests from entering the hotel and sharing a meal with your guests, install ultraviolet lights inside entrances and doors to food-service zones and delivery areas to lure flying insects to sticky board traps. In kitchen and storage areas, sticky boards are also a monitoring tool and can detect the warning signs of a potential infestation. Sticky traps can be placed behind and under equipment to help control small pest populations. For maximum effectiveness, remember to replace the bulbs in the fly lights at least once per year. Sticky boards in the fly lights and monitoring traps will require replacement on a monthly basis or more often. Any pest sightings from the sticky traps must be logged to determine pest activity and allow modifications to the IPM program as needed.

Pheromone traps and insect growth regulators: Outsmarting a pest with its own biology is a sure-fire way to keep pests out of the kitchen and other sensitive areas in the hotel. Traps baited with synthetically made versions of pheromone chemicals that insects secrete to communicate with one another will draw pests toward a sticky board and offer an easy way to track flying insect populations, particularly for stored-product pests. Similar to pheromones, insect growth regu-



Image courtesy of Orkin, Inc.

lators (IGR), or lab-created versions of insect hormones, retard pest growth and prevent reproduction, keeping pest populations from expanding. IGRs are non-toxic to humans and other animals, so they will not harm staff, guests or their pets.

Repellents and desiccants: Small amounts of a repellent dust can keep pests from hiding and breeding in those hard-to-reach cracks and crevices throughout the hotel. Insects are repelled upon contact with the repellent, which contains pyrethrins, (compounds extracted from pyrethrum flowers), and silica gel, an inorganic compound that damages insects' exoskeletons through a process called desiccation. Applications of repellents in cracks and crevices at the edge of exterior walls followed by the use of a sealant will eliminate these popular pest hideouts and help prevent future infestation.



Non-volatile baits: Non-volatile baits are often a good substitute for chemical treatments and are another environmentally friendly way to keep pests from interfering with guests' enjoyment of the property. Non-volatile bait gels and pucks are odorless and won't have guests complaining about a strong odor in the hotel. These targeted bait treatments can help eliminate whole pest populations because once an insect consumes the bait it will take it back to its harborage area where the rest of the pest population can be affected.

Organic cleaners: Shifting focus to pest prevention, organic cleaners that consist of naturally occurring bacteria and enzymes can be used to eliminate grime buildup, residual food debris, and mildew found in popular pest hot spots, including those present around drains, sinks and waste disposal areas.

When considering each of these green treatments, remember that one of the most effective ways to start implementing a green pest control program in any hotel is to gain the support of the hotel staff. Schedule a staff meeting to discuss the establishment's IPM plan and new green initiatives, and encourage employees to keep the facility clean and closely monitor and document any pest sightings with appropriate management representatives.

In combination with ongoing facility maintenance and sanitation, implementing green pest control will not only make your hotel a greener place, but also a more attractive travel destination for your guests. ✧

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