SERVICE SPECIALISTS SINCE 1904

By Patricia Hottel, BCE, Technical Director, McCloud Services

GLOBAL TRADE BRINGS MORE PEST PROBLEMS: WHAT TO DO?

The percentage of food imported in the U.S. is on the rise and that trend is expected to continue. With imports, can come pests. The challenge of controlling new invasive species will continue with the expansion of imports. Invasive pest species such as the brown marmorated stink bug and kudzu bug provide new control challenges. Both of these insects are agricultural pests and will overwinter in structures in large numbers causing problems for both farmers and food processors. They are not native species and are spreading rapidly. In addition to the true bug invasives, there have been some new invasive ant species introduced in the south like the Caribbean crazy ant and the Asian needle ant. The quarantined, stored product pest, the Khapra beetle continues to show up in the ports of the United States in increasing larger numbers. This pest can be imported on products such as rice, flour and spices from Asia and Africa and it is a particularly devastating stored product pest. With global commerce, the risks from invasive species are likely to continue.

Kudzu Bug

Brown Marmorated Stink Bug

FOOD SAFETY REGULATIONS AND THIRD PARTY AUDITS

Food safety regulations and third party audit changes are driving change in food facilities. The Global Food Safety Initiatives (GFSI) based audits are particularly focused on the documentation facets of the pest management process and program. Likewise, strong documentation to verify an effective pest management program will be needed for food safety regulatory compliance under the Food Safety Modernization Act (FSMA). Strengthening the food safety programs of imported food will also be targeted under FSMA.

PROTECTION OF ENVIRONMENTAL INITIATIVES

The ongoing protection of environmental initiatives will continue to have an impact on the pest management industry. A recent example of this can be seen in regulations designed to protect pollinating insects. Although we applaud the protection of the environment, there can be consequences. Some of these same pollinators, like bees, can provide sting hazards to food plant staff and food contamination concerns in sugar and corn syrup processing facilities. Innovative techniques are required to protect employees, food products and the environment.

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COMMITMENT TO SANITATION PROGRAMS AND STRUCTURAL INTEGRITY

The economics of performing some tasks like cleaning, and structural repair are being cut in some food plant budgets. These budget cutting measures can directly impact pest management. Sanitation and structural integrity are all critical elements of pest management which are needed for control success. For some groups of pests like the stored product insects small and flies, elimination of the food source is essential to control. If we do not eliminate the source, there are limited alternatives for long term management of the problem.

Pest populations can prosper from these budget cuts. Pest management includes reducing the conditions that contribute to pest survival. Yet the costs for services such as cleaning, which help remove pest food sources, have consistently risen. Many facilities have reduced budgets in housekeeping staff. Improved sanitation is especially important when stored product pests are found inside food processing equipment where pesticides use may be restricted. In addition, it is important to remove evidence when pest activity occurs, which is often a housekeeping staff function. Checking for reappearance of pest evidence can help in determining pest status.

To help in expediting and completing structural deficiency needs, some firms are now offering minor pest proofing to deny pest building access and harborage. Stainless steel mesh based products such as Xcluder™ can be used to seal small openings and these services are offered by pest management professionals. Many pest management firms will also offer door brush or door seal replacement to exclude pests like rodents.

About the Author

Patricia Hottel is technical director at McCloud Services and has over 35 years of pest management industry experience. Hottel is a board certified entomologist and a member of the National Pest Management Association's Commercial and Fumigation Committees. She is also a former member of the board of directors of the National Pest Management Association (NPMA) and the Illinois Pest Control Association (IPCA). She has served on the board of directors for the professional pest management fraternity, Pi Chi Omega, is a past chair and current member of the Copesan Technical Committee, is a past chair of NPMA's exam review board, and the NPMA Technical Committee. Hottel holds a bachelor's degree in entomology from the University of Georgia and a master's degree in instructional technology from the University of Central Missouri.

About McCloud Services

Founded in 1904, McCloud Services, based in South Elgin, Ill., is the leader in food protection services throughout the chain of custody – from grain elevator to grocery store. McCloud Services is known for its integrated approach to pest management, specifically designed for the food supply chain of custody. Serving the largest food-related brands in the U.S. McCloud Services has locations in 11 states with nine service centers.

McCloud Services is a founding member and shareholder in Copesan, an alliance of premier pest management companies with locations throughout North America. Headquartered in South Elgin, Illinois, McCloud Services has locations in Illinois as well as throughout Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Kentucky, Missouri, Tennessee, Ohio and Wisconsin.

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