Block treatment was established over 30 years ago, to deal with invasive pests in large housing complexes. However much has changed since then, and this workshop reviewed some of the changes, and gave delegates the opportunity to discuss new approaches to block treatment.

Back in the 1980’s, most social housing was local authority owned, occupied by council tenants, and pest control was carried out by the authority. However the situation is now more diverse:

- Responsibility for management of housing has transferred to other landlords such as housing associations;
- Many tenants have now bought their flats under the Right-to-Buy scheme;
- New pests such as ghost ants and bed bugs, have become established;
- Private pest control organisations are more involved on housing developments.

For the Pest-Ventures workshops, delegates split into groups to discuss three key topics around block treatment, and report back on their findings.

Can the old technique of block treatment teach anything to 21st century pest controllers? Clive Boase from the Pest Management Consultancy reminded delegates of the concept at Pest-Ventures 2012 before splitting them into three groups. Here Clive summarises the delegate feedback sessions.

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The topics were:

**Topic 1**
A housing block is reported as infested. How do we decide if a block treatment, as opposed to spot treatments, is necessary?
- Should we use a standard threshold, e.g. 10% of flats with infestation?
- Or should we look at each block, and make an ad hoc decision?

In general, the groups believed that it was better to look at the local situation, e.g. pest type, pest distribution in block, construction detail in block, before making a decision. This contrasts with numbers of pest control organisations that use a fixed percentage infestation rate as the trigger for block treatment.

**Topic 2**
A decision has been made to carry out a block treatment. Should we:
- Access and treat all flats and common parts?
- Or access and survey all areas, but only treat where there is active infestation?

In general, the groups believed that it was preferable to treat only the affected flats. This contrasts with the view that a block treatment should include all flats and common parts.

**Topic 3**
In practice, there will be a proportion of flats to which access is difficult, because the resident is absent, or does not want to cooperate. How could we improve access to flats?

As an alternative to the traditional threat of legal action against non-compliant tenants, the groups came up with a range of ‘Carrots’ that may increase access to flats during block treatments.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>‘Carrots’</th>
<th>‘Sticks’</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Clear tenancy agreement</td>
<td>Letter covering legal powers and consequences</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use of explanatory letters</td>
<td>Fines</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>Eviction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Direct phone-calls to tenant</td>
<td>‘Three strikes and out’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use of social media</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

‘Carrots’

‘Sticks’

**To conclude**
Firstly, it must be said that many of the participants had not been previously involved in block treatment, and the issues around it. Nonetheless, the three topics generated an animated discussion within the groups, which in some cases continued after the end of the session. It was clear that there was not a consensus on these issues, that there was plenty of scope for creative discussion, and much to learn from it.

Jim England of Protex Pest Control Services fed back on Topic 3

Bayer’s Ken Black was spokesman for Topic 2