

Lessons from a mega bed bug job



Mark called in Peter Bowers-Davis from Integrum Services for help with the job



Pest bumped into Mark Porter of Porter's Pest Control earlier this year at PestEx

It's the biggest bed bug job this pest professional has ever seen and the way he tackled it makes interesting reading. But, more than that, his decision to live stream the way he approached it, demonstrates the amazing power of social media.

Mark Porter of Porter's Pest Control cut his teeth with Prokill, first as a technician then in a sales role. Around two and half years ago he decided to set up his own business covering the whole of London. He's not looked back. From the fabulous bamboo green of his vans to his 'we can do that and with minimum environmental impact' attitude, he's just the sort of young, go-ahead pest professional this industry needs.

He already has three of those vibrant vans, as he employs two professional pest technicians, David Parrott and Gary Dunn – the other van is his, as he intends to stay a

hands-on boss. His business is a mix of contract and domestic work.

So let's go back to November 2017 when one of Mark's block management clients called him about a bed bug problem. On investigation this was no ordinary problem. A thorough survey identified 134 flats with bed bugs. The source was traced back to just one flat where it transpired the occupants had been putting up with bed bugs for six years. Why no complaint from them? It seems the couple just thought that this was something they had to live with! And oh boy, were they living with bed bugs!

So many bed bugs!

Mark had never in his 15 years as a pest controller seen so many. He commented:

"Never in a million years did I expect to see so many bed bugs. They were everywhere: in the bedroom, the kitchen, the bathroom, the living room... There were so many bed bugs that they were living in cracks in the walls, in the ceiling, under the floor boards, in all the electrical sockets in the creases of the sheets and throw – just anywhere where there was a little harbourage. Some were even living in the open in broad daylight on top of the bed sheets and throw. It really made me pause for thought. How had the occupants been able to live with this for six years?"

There were no mental health issues – they had just come to terms with it and what's more by walking through the building daily and visiting other residents in the block

Keeping it in the family

Porter's Pest Control is a family affair. Mark is MD but his wife, Holly, is office manager and no doubt keeps an eye on him. Her assistant is her mum, Dawn Blunt, Mark's mother-in-law – so he's surrounded!

Eldest son Jamie might only be 15 but he's keen to follow in dad's footsteps. He's been out on several occasions and commented that he loved the problem solving aspect of pest management and that going to work with dad has been great for his communication skills.



Bed bugs were everywhere in the sheets, in the bed frame, in the electrical sockets...

Bed bug special 2019

they'd been unwittingly spreading the problem."

Mark was clearly going to need some help (this was before he had David and Gary on board) so he called on his mate, Peter Bowers-Davis, from Integrum Services. Pooling their combined knowledge it still took a total of 14 months, including follow up and monitoring visits with detector dogs, to get totally on top of the problem.

The source flat itself had to be completely stripped and refurbished. Even the floorboards had to come up. Mark explained: "There were so many bed bugs that simply spraying insecticide was never going to be enough. Everything, all the couple's possessions, had to be thrown away. We wrapped everything moveable including the mattress and the dismantled bed frame in industrial strength cling film for safe removal from the building."

Fortunately Mark's brother is a waste disposal contractor and he was able to arrange high temperature incineration and provide the fully auditable paper trail.

Once everything that could be 'clinged' had been removed, treatment took a two pronged approach. First a Cimex Eradicator steam generator was used. This is a piece of kit that Mark wouldn't be without on bed bug jobs. He says it played a major part in their success. The steam heated to 180°C kills all stages – adults, nymphs and eggs. After the steam, a residual insecticide treatment was made using what Mark describes as the best product available – Cimetrol Super from PelGar.

Client confidence

"It was great that my client felt able to trust us with such a big job," said Mark. "I prepared a detailed report for him itemising exactly what we planned to do. It meant a lot of weekend work to get access to all the flats and some very long days which meant time away from the family, but the timing made for a healthy Christmas bonus!"



It's a wrap! Peter Bowers-Davis, right, from Integrum Services wields the cling film

Going viral

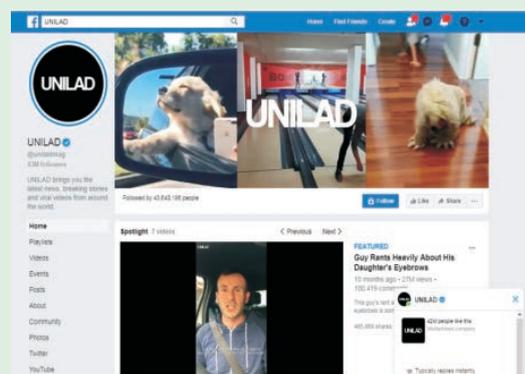
Mark's decision to live stream the job via Facebook was basically because it was such a major infestation that he wanted to share the experience with other pest professionals. What he hadn't anticipated was the enormous reach of social media and the global interest in bed bugs.

The video was picked up by Unilad and went viral achieving 1.7million views. The story was featured on *The Sun* and *The Mirror* websites and Porter's Pest Control's Facebook page now has 17,000 followers.

Mark now regularly gets questions from all over the world about bed bugs and indeed other pests. "We've become a sort of 'Agony Aunt' for pest infestations and offer advice where we can, although if it's a bed bug problem we always point out that it needs a professional solution.

It might now be heading towards two years since the footage was first live streamed but the video continues to grab media attention. The latest to feature the job and to interview Mark was *Channel 4's Homes from Hell* broadcast on 1 August 2019.

The video is in two parts
www.facebook.com/608885124/videos/10159573319630125/?t=10
and www.facebook.com/IntegrumPestControl/videos/310365692782913/



The Porter's Pest Control bamboo green fleet, from left Mark Porter, Gary Dunn and David Parrott