

pest

The independent UK pest management magazine

Big birds hard to deter

Issue 14
March & April 2011

NPTA survey reveals
rodent control threat



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at PestEx



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grey?



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As the industry's only independent magazine, **Pest** aims to deliver a mix of unbiased news, impartial advice and topical technical features. We are committed to being as inclusive as possible covering every sector of the pest management industry.

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March & April 2010

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Change is in the air

Spring is a time of change but this year the changes surging through our industry are tsunami-like.

The government spending review is sweeping through local authority pest control units leaving a number casualties in its wake, as our article on pages 8 & 9 reports. One thing that is often overlooked in these situations, is that with the retirement or redundancy of these local authority pest managers, the experience and skills base that goes with them, is lost forever. Such expertise will be very difficult to replace. Of course, change also brings exciting new opportunities. For many private pest control servicing companies, the loss of council-run pest control departments represent hot commercial prospects.

With all this change afoot, it is extremely timely that the first-ever National UK Pest Management Survey has been completed. The results from this joint initiative between ourselves and BASF Pest Control Solutions will be revealed at PestEx. Happily, as our five-page preview of this flagship event shows, despite the uncertainty, there will be plenty to see with no shortage of new exhibitors keen to sell their wares to UK pest controllers. **Pest** will be there too, reporting on the event and its seminars but, just as importantly, meeting our advertisers and readers. We hope to see you there.

Frances McKim

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Falcons to the rescue

This year there seem to have been more reports than ever of flocks, or to give them their correct collective term – murmurations, of starlings recorded up and down the country. Dairy farmers have been particularly hard hit, as the starlings find the food available in their cattle sheds irresistible. Helping out these troubled farmers is Steve Birchall, seen below, of Cheshire Falconry, based at Blakemore Craft Centre. "We post our falcons at key points around a farm and when their birds of prey are on patrol the starlings get out of the way double-quick. When you arrive at a dairy farm at this time of year you simply can't miss the starlings," explained Steve.

"They perch in the trees, on telephone wires and on fences, anywhere that is in easy striking distance from the cow sheds. But when one of our falcons swoops down they soon disperse."



Barrettine strengthens its team

Barrettine Environmental Health has announced the appointment of Robert Eardley as its new technical sales manager for the Midlands and North. Rob will be joining the team towards the end of March, in time for PestEx.

Commenting on the appointment, divisional director Chris Parmiter said: "We're delighted to be welcoming Rob to the team. In a career spanning nearly 17 years, he brings with him fantastic experience of the servicing side, having worked both in the private sector and, more recently, as senior pest control officer at Coventry City Council."

Kent contractor to be prosecuted?

A contractor based on the Kent coast who provides a service that includes dealing with urban gull problems recently discovered that even when operating under a General Licence, the action taken may be challenged.

Following the removal of a Herring gull nest that contained eggs from the roof of a domestic property in the spring of 2010, a case was brought by the RSPCA under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 for the destruction of the nest and eggs. The prosecution was due to go to court on 14 March 2011 but was dropped the week before by the RSPCA who decided not to offer any evidence.

New rules on safe airgun storage

Effective from 10 February 2011, it will be an offence to allow anyone under 18 years old to gain access to an airgun. Owners of airguns will be liable for a fine of up to £1,000 if they do not take reasonable precautions to stop unauthorised access.

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High rise fox

Pest controllers to the rescue! An intrepid fox was discovered at the top of the country's tallest skyscraper. The animal made its way to the roof of the Shard at London Bridge, still under construction, which is more than 288 metres high.

On 17 February Southwark Council pest control officers caught the animal, which had got itself trapped on the 72 floor. It made its way there via the central stairwell.

The creature is thought to have travelled the highest distance ever recorded. It remained at large for nearly two weeks living off scraps of food left by builders.

Named 'Romeo' by council staff as his record-breaking escapade ended shortly after Valentine's Day, the fox was none the worse for his adventure. He has since been released back into the London Bridge neighbourhood, close to his den and family, after being assessed by experts at the Riverside Animal Centre in Wallington.

Les Leonard, pest control manager at Southwark Council, added: "Romeo wasn't exactly living the high-life, having lived off scraps for two weeks, so I'm sure he was glad to be rescued. As far as the job went, it was scary stuff heading all the way up to the top of the building, especially going up the last 34 floors on the outside of the building. It was definitely not your typical call out."



© George Rex Photography

Ups and downs at Rentokil

On 8 February Rentokil announced its preliminary results for the year ending 31 December 2010. Profits leapt by more than 20% in the UK pest control business, with city analysts describing the whole pest control services division as one of the company's bright spots. This followed the announcement six days earlier that the company had acquired the services division of Santia Group, previously known as Connaught Compliance. Santia's services division consisted of three business units – fumigation & pest control, water treatment & hygiene and fire safety & prevention. The pest control operation will be merged with Rentokil's UK pest business.

On the downside, readers will remember (see **Pest** issue 4 – July & August 2009) that Rentokil is now in the middle of a three-year, £24 million government contract to control a chronic rat problem in Tripoli, Benghazi and Misratah in Libya. Reports circulated some months ago of lack of payment by the Libyan government. However, that is nothing compared to the current problems in the country. Rentokil has suspended operations until it is safe to resume. Five staff returned safely to the UK at the end of February. As to the likely effect on profits, Rentokil remains stum.

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Paul scoops top Scout award

Paul Bates, managing director of Surrey-based Cleankill Pest Control, is celebrating having been awarded the Chief Scout's top accolade, the Medal of Merit, for outstanding service to Scouting over the past 28 years.

During his time as Cub Scout Leader of the 11th Purley cub pack, Paul has helped more than 220 girls and boys to experience a range of activities from camping and climbing to abseiling and archery. The father-of-two stepped into the role in 1983 when he heard his local pack was in danger of closing and hasn't looked back since. He said: "I was told it was only one night a week but that wasn't quite true. Now most of my spare time, is spent doing cub-related work."



Paul (left) receives his award from assistant district commissioner Roger Jones

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New look for BPCA



A complete new image has been revealed by the British Pest Control Association (BPCA) – including a new logo. Under the leadership of Simon Forrester, BPCA chief executive, a new, clean and fresh looking visual appearance for BPCA has been introduced. It forms part of what BPCA is calling a marketing 'blitz'. Not only a new logo but also a new website. The move also sees the re-launch of their own magazine **PPC (Professional Pest Controller)**.

Further announcements on new initiatives will be made at PestEx.

read more on the web
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SUD requirements likely to be weakened

Efforts, required under the agricultural version of the Sustainable Use Directive (SUD), to raise the level of professionalism recently took a turn for the worse. Whilst we would all welcome the move to end the 'goldplating' of EU legislation when converted into domestic law, in this case it could scupper the forecasted raising of pest control standards.

The regulations from the SUD are some of the first to be implemented since the Coalition's decision to transpose all European Directives directly into UK law. Simon Forrester, BPCA chief executive said: "We are extremely disappointed to hear that, rather than raising standards, the Coalition Government seems happy to go to the lowest common denominator. This undermines all our industry's efforts to raise the bar on professionalism through training and Continuing Professional Development. It leaves the door open to the misuse of pesticides on a wide scale. We will continue to lobby hard to prevent this retrograde step. We will be focussing on this topic at a PestEx seminar on 6 April."

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Wildlife & Natural Environment (Scotland) Bill passed



The Wildlife and Natural Environment (Scotland) Bill (known colloquially as WaNE) was passed on 2 March by MSPs in the Scottish Parliament following 18 months of consultation on a broad range of issues.

Pest controllers will be interested to hear that a controversial amendment which sought a ban on snares was voted down. Snaring is to be allowed to continue albeit under tougher rules and with a five year review. Many of these new requirements mirror those demanded within England.

A new criminal vicarious liability offense is to be introduced. Landowners would be legally responsible for the criminal actions of their employees when such actions relate to raptor persecution incidents. This means estate owners will no longer be able to turn

a blind eye to the activities of their gamekeepers, for example in cases of alleged illegal poisoning of raptors. Despite strong opposition from some quarters, this amendment was accepted and is expected to become enforceable in autumn 2011.

Roseanna Cunningham, Minister for the Environment said: "Wildlife crime has loomed over many debates. We are not prepared to tolerate continued persecution of our magnificent birds of prey. I say to those who question whether the problem persists that they should look at the facts. Despite sensationalist pronouncements on one side and almost denialist pronouncements on the other, we know that we continue to find birds poisoned in our countryside."

Scotland wakes-up to bedbugs

Scottish environmental health experts have been warned of a dramatic increase in the incidence of bedbugs.

Members of the Royal Environmental Health Institute for Scotland (REHIS) gathered in Glasgow on 24 February to discuss the rise in incidences of bedbugs across Scotland and to share best practice on how to deal with this growing problem.

Keynote speaker, Oliver Madge from the Bed Bug Foundation said: "Everyone needs to understand that this is a significant problem being experienced in high density cities across the world. Contrary to popular belief, bedbugs are not a thing of the past and are very much a current problem and one that is increasing and that needs to be addressed now."

These sentiments are echoed by the practical experiences of Graham Pest Control, Scotland's largest independent pest control company, as Ross Graham explained: "Bedbugs are without doubt the single most rapidly increasing pest. Over the last seven to eight years they have become a significant part of our business. We have one member of staff totally dedicated to this pest."

Asked if they were just a problem in the urban areas of Edinburgh and Glasgow, Ross said: "Bedbugs are now found all over Scotland, for example in Oban and Fort William as well. And they are not just found in hotels, they are in domestic houses – people are bringing them back from their holidays."



REHIS

Bell to the rescue

A team of scientists from the Dundee-based South Georgia Habitat Restoration Project has just begun dropping tons of rodent bait from helicopters onto the UK island of South Georgia in the South Atlantic.

In what is said to be the largest rodent extermination in history, the objective is to rid the island of rats and so protect the island birdlife. This includes the South Georgia pipit, the world's most southerly songbird, only found on South Georgia and threatened with extinction.

The team is led by Professor Tony Martin from the University of Dundee who said: "Killing any rat on an island like South Georgia is a hell of a challenge. If you under-estimate their ability to survive, you will fail. I have a huge respect for rats."

"The vast majority of birds that should be breeding on South Georgia have been

displaced by rats, which have gone virtually everywhere except the very cold southern coast. We are looking to restore millions, possibly tens of millions, of sea birds."

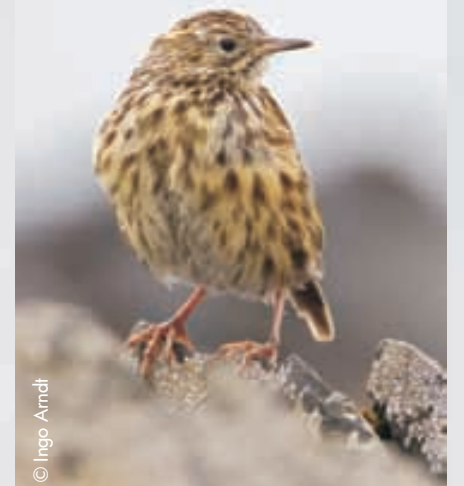
Ground-nesting birds have little defense against the rats, introduced 200 years ago on sealing and whaling ships.

The helicopter pilots will broadcast some 33.5 tonnes of a specially pelleted brodifacoum bait, developed by Bell, on three adjacent areas on the north coast that surround the only inhabited part of the main island.

In total Bell manufactured and shipped 2,558 bags of bait, totalling nearly 57,600 kg. Seven 20-foot containers, each containing 10 pallets, left Bell's American headquarters between 19-21 October heading for Southampton. There the bait was loaded onto a British military ship for the long trek south to Stanley, the capital of the Falkland Islands where it was transported, with other equipment and supplies, to South Georgia.

The logistics of an operation of this magnitude are daunting and a critical part of the operation is the bait.

"It has to arrive in pristine condition, free from any contaminants or mould caused from condensation build-up as the ship



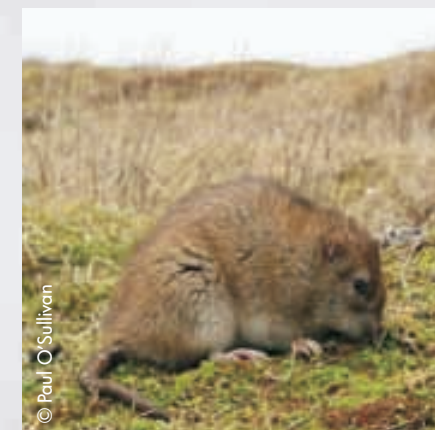
At risk, the South Georgia pipit

crosses the tropics," noted Bell's compliance manager, Craig Riekema, who is the liaison between Bell and the project staff.

The time and distance the bait spent in transit called for special shipping procedures. Shipping containers were steam-cleaned and thoroughly dried before being filled. The pellets were packed in multi-layer paper bags and then stacked on

pallets which were double bagged and shrink wrapped.

One-pound desiccant bags were included on pallets. To Bell's credit all the rodenticide arrived in pristine condition enabling the first drops to begin in early March.

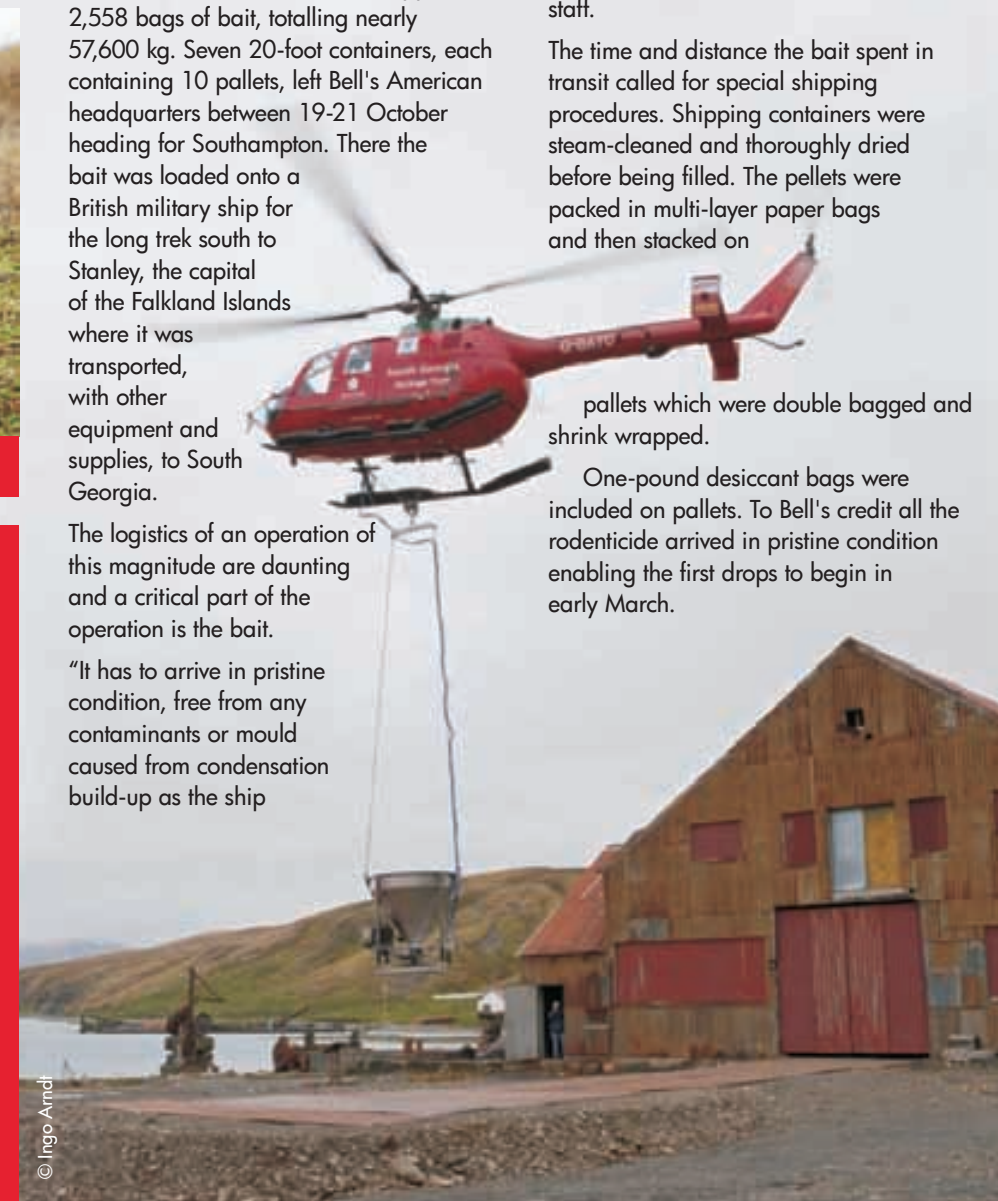


The culprit, the Norway rat

Specialist team of wildlife prosecutors formed in Scotland

On 24 February it was announced that the prosecution of wildlife and environmental crime is to be enhanced by the appointment of a team of three full-time specialist prosecutors, the Solicitor General Frank Mulholland QC announced.

The team will investigate, mark and prosecute all cases involving crimes against wildlife and the environment in Scotland. The specialists will be spread across Scotland, but will work together to share knowledge and experience of cases.



Belts begin to be tightened

We have all heard about the cutbacks in funding to councils by the Government in the Local Government Finance settlement. Cuts in the next financial year amount to £2.4 billion. Or put another way, on average councils will have to cut their spending budgets by 11% from April 2011.

But hearing about this on a nationwide scale is one thing. Discovering how it translates into actual pest control activities is quite something else. At this operational level the unthinkable is happening. And it starts to become personal, as cornerstones of our industry have begun to leave. The face of local authority pest control is changing radically.

Due to downsizing of the pest control service at Manchester City Council, Dave Oldbury, group manager of pest control services, has elected to take early retirement. In nearby Liverpool, Environmental Health will cease to be an entity as it becomes part of



Neighbourhood Services.

At Bristol City Council Richard Bevan is relinquishing his pest control activities and becomes manager for, parks estates, play, cemeteries and crematoria; although he is retaining chairmanship of the Western Pest Liaison Group and continuing as a member of NPAP.

Within London several changes are afoot. Adrian Greaves is departing Tower Hamlets, John Leader has opted for voluntary redundancy at Hackney, Dave Coleman at Camden has had his 'position deleted' and is unsure as to his next move. And these are only the positions **Pest** has been made aware of.

A review of the press cuttings which have passed over our editorial desk reveals the changes as detailed below. No attempt has been made to contact all these councils to substantiate this information. This list simply records those changes which have been reported by the local press.

Pest control charges up, free treatments down

A common line of attack to save money is to either abandon free domestic services or to raise the level of charges. The theory adopted by the local councillors goes – call-outs will remain stable, so income derived increases.

However as most working in this sector know – this is not the case. In April 2010 Sheffield City Council, for example, withdrew free domestic rodent work and began charging £35. In the first three months of operation, the number of complaints fell by half.

Councils reported to be going down this route are: Oxford City, City of York, Derby City, New Forest, Waltham Forest and the Test Valley. Reported charges for a domestic rodent treatments range from £45 for rats and mice by New Forest, to a whopping £105 for mice by Waltham Forest.

Contracting out

Joining the band of councils who have already contracted-out their pest services are Mid Suffolk, Basingstoke, Greenwich and North Kesteven. By going down this route, operations may no longer be provided by council staff, but a pest service is still available via the contractor. And let's not forget, this change is actually good news for the pest control company awarded the contract.

In early February, MITIE took-on the pest activities for Mid Suffolk District Council. Councillors were at pains to point out that with these new arrangements, not only were funds saved, but a greater level of service was offered – rising from 12 pests previously covered to 19 – and at charges ranging from £25 to £75, which in some cases included up to three visits.

Total cop-out

Finally there are those councils who have totally thrown-in the towel and effectively washed their hands of pest control. In 2009 the City of Lincoln abandoned their free scheme for householders, introduced a £48 charge and contracted-out their pest control. Surprise surprise! The new arrangements failed to bring in as much money as hoped. Result – the scheme is to be ditched and residents left to their own devices.

Amusingly, on the eve of closing down their own pest services, the Vale of White Horse District Council suffered a flea outbreak in their own offices in Abingdon.

CIEH not immune either

Another casualty in the local authority sector is the annual conference organised by the Chartered Institute of Environmental Health (CIEH). Called *Best of the Best* and last year transferred to Telford, the event will not be held this year at all. Maybe in 2012, but who knows?

Taking the pulse of UK pest control

What a response! Well over 350 of you have taken part in the first-ever National UK Pest Management Survey organised by BASF Pest Control Solutions and **Pest**.

"With such an amazing response, we are going to have some robust benchmark data about current public and private sector attitudes and intentions," says **Pest** associate editor Helen Riby.

"To give you a flavour and looking at responses to date, I've taken a look at the replies to the question 'How do you see the prospects for your pest control work in the coming year and over the next five years?'," she explains.

"It is interesting to note the difference between the local authority sector and those who are self-employed, or work for private sector pest control companies. For the coming year the local authority people are reasonably optimistic with more than two thirds expecting prospects to be no worse than last year. Over the longer term however the outlook is much more gloomy with around a quarter replying 'poor' or 'very poor' and almost as many being so unsettled that they answered 'don't know'.

"On the other hand in the private sector there is a pretty optimistic mood over the short term with over 70% selecting 'good' or 'very good'. If anything the mood is even brighter over the five year period with 80% choosing 'good' or 'very good' and just 3% thinking that prospects are 'poor' or 'very poor'.

As a unique 'coal-face' barometer of our industry's structure, health, opportunities and challenges, the survey will enable business managers, technicians and self-employed pest controllers alike to set their understanding, experience and planning in the most reliable national context. It will also provide everyone involved with solid data to help reinforce the value of their work to the wider world.

"The full results will be unveiled at a special seminar during PestEx so make a note in your diary and don't miss it – 15.30 on 6 April, repeated on 7 April at 12.30. We look forward to seeing you there," concludes Helen.

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1x11g Fortefog Midi Fumer



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Gull aware

Few bird species divide public opinion as strongly as gulls. Nick Warburton investigates the problem in urban areas and asks whether a solution to managing them successfully can ever be found?

Peter Rock, a Bristol-based researcher, and arguably the nation's leading expert on urban gulls, has been investigating their colonies in the Severn Estuary since the early 1980s.

For nearly three decades, he's noted an unstoppable rise in the urban populations of Herring and Lesser Black-backed gulls in the 33 colonies he's studied. His conclusions make depressing reading for building owners and town councils.

"We are spending an awful lot of money on deterrents," he warns. "But they have made almost no impact at all, even on the rate of growth of urban colonies."

It's a controversial view and one many pest controllers would question. But Peter argues that more research needs to be done to understand why the colonies are flourishing so successfully before any expenditure can be targeted prudently. He points to a project

at Bristol University that aims to use global positioning satellite technology to monitor feeding patterns of urban gulls and their migratory movements in Bath, Bristol and Gloucester.

"Urban gulls are not the same as the rest of the gulls that breed in traditional rural colonies," he argues. "They are far more successful and the key to managing them is to understand why they are so successful in urban areas."

Another bone of contention for him is the actual number of urban gulls in the UK.

The Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB) estimates that from 1994-2002, the number of Herring gulls nesting on roofs doubled to 20,000 pairs, while the roof nesting Lesser Black-backed gulls increased fourfold to 11,000 pairs.

While these figures mirror the government's



own estimate of 30,000 pairs, Peter argues that this number is lifted from the Seabird 2000 survey, which is a decade out of date, and underestimated the actual number of pairs at the time. He believes that the UK and Ireland's urban gull population is now around 100,000 pairs.

Public opinion is strongly divided on gulls but one of the most common complaints is the cacophony of noise generated by nesting birds in the early hours.

During the breeding season it's particularly acute and can cause considerable distress to light sleepers.

Gulls also deface private property and public buildings, costing thousands of pounds in clean-up. Debris from infestations can cause blocked gutters and drains, which can lead to serious flooding and hefty costs in damage.

"In one office block they said they had had flooding through three floors, because one nest had blocked a roof drainage channel," says Andrew Staples, from Worcester-based Red Kite Pest Control.

Possessive and aggressive

Responsible for Worcester City Council's gull control since 2006, Andrew says the most serious issue is the safety hazard when gulls are aggressive towards the public.

"It's when they have chicks that are young. They are very possessive and will attack in quite a wide area around the nest," he says.

Highly intelligent and incredibly resilient, gulls first started moving inland and setting up colonies during the early 1960s, but did not increase greatly in numbers until the 1990s. The tipping point might have been the decline in the commercial fishing industry, which forced birds to migrate elsewhere for food sources.

Whatever the reason, the urban environment provides an ideal setting for colonies to

flourish. The flat roofs equate to the bird's natural habitat for nesting – cliff tops.

Plenty of food

Another important factor is that they've got a ready supply of food, whether it is leftovers poorly concealed and easily accessible in gardens, dumped on streets or at nearby landfill sites or from avid bird lovers feeding gulls. The urban environment also extends their feeding time.

"In the cities, you've got the lights on all the time," continues Andrew Staples. "A lot of these birds are not turning nocturnal but they are certainly feeding quite late at night."

The microclimate in urban areas is also warmer than rural areas, which means that gulls could be breeding earlier in the season. What's more, apart from pest control, urban gulls are free from any natural predators that would normally keep their numbers in check.

Control methods

Historically, pest controllers have used an array of different control methods to prevent gulls from infesting individual buildings while local authorities have generally been

more interested in managing populations.

According to Grahame Turner, technical manager at Network, some building owners are investing considerable amounts of money in installing netting.

He says that it could cost a building owner as much as £30,000 just to net the roof of a single building.

Pest controllers will also apply spikes to ledges and/or netting to inaccessible areas on roofs, for instance, between chimney pots, to move birds away from problem areas.

Ingenious installation method

The Liverpool-based Precision Abseiling has come up with an ingenious way of installing nets, spikes and other control methods.

"Abseiling combines the cost of expensive access costs, labour and experience all into one package," says Darren Payne. "We've been deterring nuisance birds for over 15 years using this method."

However, Dave Archer, an independent pest control consultant based in Moray, is sceptical about the long-term success of



Purpose-made and made-to-measure units cover potential gull nesting sites between roof and chimney

many treatment and proofing measures.

"We always underestimate them," he warns. "The gulls in this part of the world have now learnt about the spikes and will throw nesting material on to them until it's built up to about nine inches and they've got a platform."

"This is definitely learnt behaviour. Once one has done it and others have seen it, you'll find that the behaviour spreads through the colonies."

But David Apps, who runs the Kent-based Gull Guard, a business that supplies and fits two different purpose-made units to cover both chimneys and flat roofs, believes that these products will deter gulls from nesting.

Made to measure approach

"Our chimney units are made out of 6mm round steel and are covered in galvanised aviary netting and we make everything to measure," he says.

"Once we go up and measure the chimney,

we make the unit, fit it and it's up there for 10-15 years. These units are guaranteed that they can't nest back in there again. Also, the flat roof units are checked yearly if customers request it."

Electric deterrent

One of the more recent additions to the market is the Avishock electric deterrent on ledges. The product comprises a track containing a pair of conductors, powered by an energiser that emits pulses of electricity.

According to Grahame Turner, it works in a similar way to livestock electric fences by giving gulls a harmless electric shock when they stand on a protected substrate.

But Peter Rock is not convinced. "You can exclude gulls from your building but they are not going to give up breeding," he argues. "They will go and breed somewhere else. Someone else is going to collect the problem."

"Just because the gulls move on somewhere else does not mean the control measure has not been successful for the building owner who has protected the building", counters Grahame.

"This comes back to the difference between individual building protection and area-wide management."

Perhaps a better course of action would be to try and stop the increase in urban populations?

Natural England is responsible

for issuing a number of licences that permit pest controllers and others to carry out activities that would otherwise be unlawful under the Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981.

Recent changes to the General Licence covering public health and safety have removed the Herring gull and the Great Black-backed gull from the Act giving them added protection.

However, according to Paul Butt, from Natural England, local authorities and commercial pest controllers are still allowed to legally remove nests and eggs under certain conditions.

Egg pricking

Dave Archer carries out egg pricking under the General Licence using a small needle.

"You've got to have the confidence to get a hit first time, so that the eggs won't hatch but the birds will still sit and incubate the eggs," he says.

"Once they're sure the eggs aren't going to hatch, you are really into July/August and they'll just abandon the nest. But, if they catch-on to what you've done, they'll go back, kick the eggs out and relay."

Another method that is commonly used by pest controllers is egg oiling, which sterilises the egg.

Arguably the most effective method is egg replacement. "The imitation eggs are used to replace newly laid eggs



Sleep pattern of gulls identified

Sleeping is a risky business for any bird, as it makes it vulnerable to predators.

In research documented for the first time by Dr Guy Beauchamp of the University of Montreal, Canada it has been revealed that seagulls have developed a sophisticated chain-reaction sleep system which enables them to watch out for each other.

Working in 'waves', the gulls slept more soundly if their immediate neighbours in the flock were sleeping, but were more

alert when nearby seagulls woke up.

By studying gull resting sites in the Bay of Fundy, New Brunswick, Canada, Dr Beauchamp discovered that gulls with more alert neighbours opened their eyes more often while sleeping. They pay attention to what their neighbours are doing, and adjust their sleep pattern accordingly. By copying the behaviour of their near neighbours 'waves of sleep' pass through the colony with the proportion of gulls asleep or awake rising and falling.



Free egg and nest removal

A case study from Dumfries and Galloway Council

Lying on the banks of the river Nith, which flows into the Solway Firth, the market town of Dumfries had suffered problems from increasing numbers of seagulls. Although there is no statutory requirement to take action against gulls, in 2008 Dumfries and Galloway Council set up a task force to explore options to tackle the problems associated with nesting gulls.

Between March and May 2009, the Scottish Government funded a trial in which falcons were flown over Dumfries town centre, to evaluate their effect in disturbing gulls when they were preparing to nest, and therefore interrupt their breeding season.

Falcon effect wears off

The trial showed that the gulls, although initially disturbed, became less agitated towards May as they became more determined to breed.

Following this a free egg and nest removal service was offered to residential properties throughout Dumfries and to a number of commercial properties in the town centre. Approximately, 1,535 eggs were removed from 671 nests between May and July.

In 2010 the council extended the free egg and nest removal service to all commercial and residential premises in Dumfries where public health and safety was affected by gulls. This was under the General Licence issued by the Scottish Government.

In total 887 (822 in 2009) visits to properties were made with 1,486 (671 in 2009) nests and 2,949 (1,535 in 2009) eggs being removed. It was estimated that approximately 90% of all nests/eggs were removed from the premises falling within the removal programme.

Despite the removal programme the number of pairs of nesting



Dumfries town centre has benefited from the council's egg and nest removal work

gulls in Dumfries increased by two thirds between 2009 and 2010 (up to 618 from 370). There was no one explanation for the increase although suggestions were put forward by the independent monitor which included the reduction of a significant nesting site close to Dumfries in 2009, a good breeding season four years ago and disturbance of a colony elsewhere in the UK.

Biggest increase where no removal service

The greatest increase in numbers however occurred on sites where the nest and egg removal service had not been provided in 2009 with an increase up to 14%. In the town centre, where nest and egg removal had taken place, there was a smaller increase of around 4.5%.

The independent assessment suggests that the removal of eggs in 2010 resulted in an 87% drop in the number of young gulls (down to 650) and that the number of gulls present at any one time in the town centre during June and July fell by around 50%.

The number of complaints in 2010 however increased by 32% (from 81 in 2009 to 106). This figure must be viewed against the 67% increase in the overall number of gulls and the raised awareness of the public associated with the removal campaign.

The final costs for the removal of nests and eggs in 2010 was £30,079. Funding of £40,000 has recently been agreed to continue the work in 2011. Additional signage is also to be erected throughout the town centre before the end of March 2011 advising the public not to feed the gulls.

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in the seagull nests at the start of the season" explains Matt Chambers from Stroud-based Paul Norman Plastics.

"The eggs then get to work by tricking the gulls into sitting on and incubating them for the entire breeding season."

According to Matt, egg replacement helps control aggressive behaviour, noise and mess, which are common problems once chicks hatch.

More research needed

Andrew Staples uses plastic eggs as replacements in Worcester. "If you look at the potential for breeding, an urban colony could increase by 18% a year," he says.

"If we stop control in Worcester and the population goes up 18% every year, you'll soon lose any advantage. You have to control, there is no other option."

Andrew agrees more research is needed but challenges Peter Rock's argument that egg replacement does not work because gull pairs are breeding at a rate that far outstrips the number of eggs replaced.

"If you stop each nesting pair from producing three chicks, you must by definition be reducing the population," he argues.



Abseiling is often the best and sometimes the only option when it comes to installing nets and spikes

"Anything less than an 18% increase is having an effect."

Grahame Turner believes that there is an important role for councils and the pest control industry to promote the reduction of gull feeding sites.

"Principally, the population of gulls has to be directly related to the available food supply within their foraging radius," he says.

Peter Rock agrees that the pest control industry has a vital role in resolving the urban gull population. But before identifying that role, he says first we need to find out how and why urban gulls are so successful.

"We really do need to know what precisely we're dealing with," he says. "Until then, we will continue to have a problem on our hands."

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Survey highlights local authority rodent control threat

Local authority economies are posing a major threat to rat and mouse control across the country, reveals the latest annual rodent survey report from the National Pest Technicians Association (NPTA). And unprecedented national austerity measures planned for the coming year are set to make the position markedly worse.

This is certainly not good news, as this eleventh annual survey was conducted at the end of 2010, before the true extent of the recent council cutbacks this year became apparent. Not so long ago NPTA would have welcomed the significant fall in professional rodent treatments reported by the public sector in 2009/10 as a sign of success in the constant battle against rats and mice.

Instead, however, NPTA views the major

decline in local authority participation revealed this year and the clear linkage between the significant annual fall in treatments recorded and the shift in charging policy as a serious warning for the future.

On a like-for-like basis (comparing reports from only the same local authorities in each year to eliminate the distortions of the different response levels) the benchmark BASF-sponsored survey shows national

brown rat and house mouse treatment levels were down by around 19% and 12% respectively on 2008/9.

Those local authorities charging for some, or all, of their rat control work, however, recorded a 28% year-on-year reduction in treatment levels. In contrast, those continuing to offer rat control services free of charge saw treatment levels fall by just 9%. Comparable figures for house mouse treatments were 15% and 8%.

"This demonstrates the extent to which the current national fall is associated with local authority charging, rather than actual infestation levels," stresses NPTA chief executive, John Davison.

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"While the overwhelming majority of local authorities always used to provide rodent control free of charge, our latest survey shows that over 60% are now charging for at least some of their rat control services and nearly three quarters for house mouse treatments.

"What is more, as they respond to current austerity measures our survey figures indicate this is likely to rise to more than 75% and 80% respectively."

At this scale of public sector charging, NPTA believes its annual survey has reached a major watershed, the figures becoming an increasingly greater reflection of the decline in local authority service provision than any change in national infestation levels.

With local authority charging increasing to the extent the survey suggests, it calculates that only an unprecedented upsurge in rodent problems in the future could prevent the national data showing a continued annual decline in public sector treatments.

"In parallel to the decline in local authority treatments, our members report a particularly worrying increase in poorly-managed DIY rodent control by householders and businesses alike," John Davison notes. "We also have immediate worries over the increasingly reactive and fragmented approach we are seeing to rodent control across the country.

Skills shortage predicted

"If anything though, we are even more concerned about the impact public sector cutbacks will have on the central role local authorities have long played in pest control training and practice development. The full implications of this are unlikely to become evident for eight to 10 years – by which time it will be far too late to take any corrective action."

In the 2009/10 survey local authority officers again identified the three main causes of rodent problems as over-feeding of wild birds in gardens, defective drains and sewers and poorly managed domestic waste.

While 83% of respondents saw wild bird over-feeding as a key issue in rodent management in 2008/9, however, only 74% did so in the current survey. In the same way, poor domestic waste management was only seen as a major factor by 41% of officers, rather than the 48% identifying it the previous year.

NPTA welcomes the clear signs of improvement in both these important respects as evidence that householders and local authority waste managers are

responding to the problems identified, over several years of surveying, by taking active steps to reduce the ready availability of rodent food sources.

Sadly, though, it stresses that the same cannot be said of drain and sewer maintenance. The proportion of officers highlighting defects in this area having risen from 55% in 2008/9 to 62% currently.

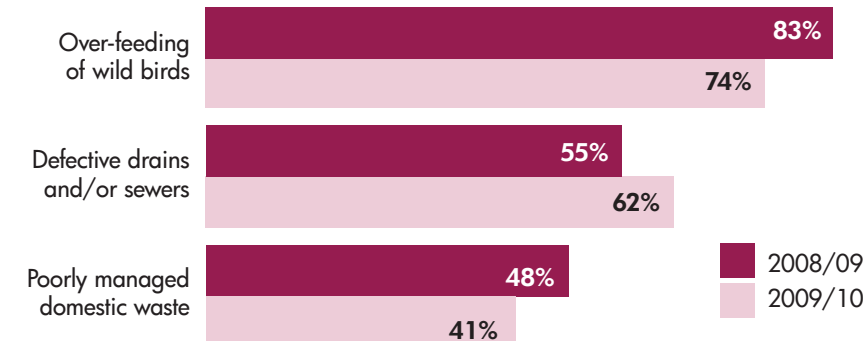
To face these challenges, NPTA and BASF Pest Control Solutions believe a major change in national rodent control practice is essential if far greater rat and mouse problems are not to become an inevitable consequence of public sector cutbacks. They urge householders, businesses and communities to work much harder together to discourage rodents. At the same time, they insist that rat and mouse control must increasingly be focused on only the most effective treatments using the best available



NPTA's John Davison

baits and baiting practices. And, hardest of all perhaps, they call on private businesses and public sector organisations to co-ordinate control activities far better across communities.

Main causes of rodent problems



Proportion of officers citing

Source: 2009/10 Rodent Survey Report

Copies of the full 2009/10 Rodent Survey Report are available at www.npta.org.uk and www.pestcontrol.basf.co.uk and also from the **Pest** website at www.pestmagazine.co.uk

NPTA results mirror NPAP survey

The NPTA survey results reinforces those of the National Pest Advisory Panel (NPAP) survey which were presented at the CIEH *Best of the Best* conference last autumn.

The NPAP survey was undertaken even earlier, in February 2009, with returns from 255 local authorities throughout the UK. It revealed that the number of councils who had given up providing any sort of pest control service had risen from 1% in 2002 to 10% in 2009.

The percentage of councils who undertook the work in-house had declined to 71% (from 78% in 2002) with a corresponding rise in contracted-out services from 13% in 2002 to 22% in 2009.

Also as recorded by NPTA, the NPAP survey saw a significant fall in the number of in-house treatments for rats from 82% in 2002 to 66% in 2009 and for mice from 83% to 65%. Whereas contractor treatments rose. Free treatments in private dwellings fell from 83% in 2002 to 68% in 2009 for rats and from 58% in 2002 to 42% in 2009 for mice.

A more detailed review of this NPAP survey featured in **Pest** issue 11, September & October 2010.

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PestEx Previewed

PestEx 2011 is just around the corner. 6 and 7 April to be precise. Organised by the British Pest Control Association (BPCA) the event will once again be at ExCeL in London's Docklands. Here we look at what's on offer and provide some tips on how to get the best from your visit.

The 2011 event is the first since the arrival of new BPCA chief executive Simon Forrester and there have been some changes. In particular a renewed focus on the needs of practical pest controllers. Many would argue that this was overdue but, to be fair, there has always been plenty at PestEx for those at the coalface, it is just that the perception has taken hold that PestEx is more of a managers' event with an international appeal.

"That's definitely not the case," says Simon. "The organising team has worked hard to make sure there is something for everyone at the event – managers, international visitors and professional technicians."

Whether its technical detail, practical advice or information to help businesses decide where their future focus should lie, the seminar and workshop programme looks very promising.

In the business theatre the emphasis is on giving people a chance to participate rather than be lectured to. Some controversial topics are being tackled such as the government's comprehensive spending review, the Sustainable Use Directive, qualifications and pest control and the law. Go along, hear what others have to say and make your views known.

Being a member of a professional Continuing Professional Development (CPD) scheme is a well-established way of demonstrating professionalism in all sorts of sectors, not just pest control.

"We have worked closely with BASIS PROMPT, who provide the CPD scheme for pest controllers, to make sure that PestEx 2011 provides plenty of opportunity to collect CPD points," adds Simon.

One of the new initiatives is the PestEx CPD Trail. Follow the Trail, talk to the exhibitors involved and complete the CPD Trail questionnaire to earn your CPD points.

The technical seminar programme has a new twist as well. The five topics being covered on each day will be chosen from ideas put forward by exhibitors who will also be involved in running these sessions.

The focus for the practical demonstrations is pest control surveys. Getting the survey right is the first and often most important step in profitable, professional pest control.

But let's not forget the exhibitors. With more than 60 stands to visit you will have your work cut out getting round them all! As well as all the familiar faces from the major industry manufacturers and distributors there are a larger number of PestEx first-timers than usual. We've invited them to let us know what they are up to. Those that replied are reviewed on pages 22 and 23.

Of course *Pest* publications will also be there. So why not come along to Stand 4 and say hello. We are always keen to meet our readers and to hear what you think.



March & April 2011

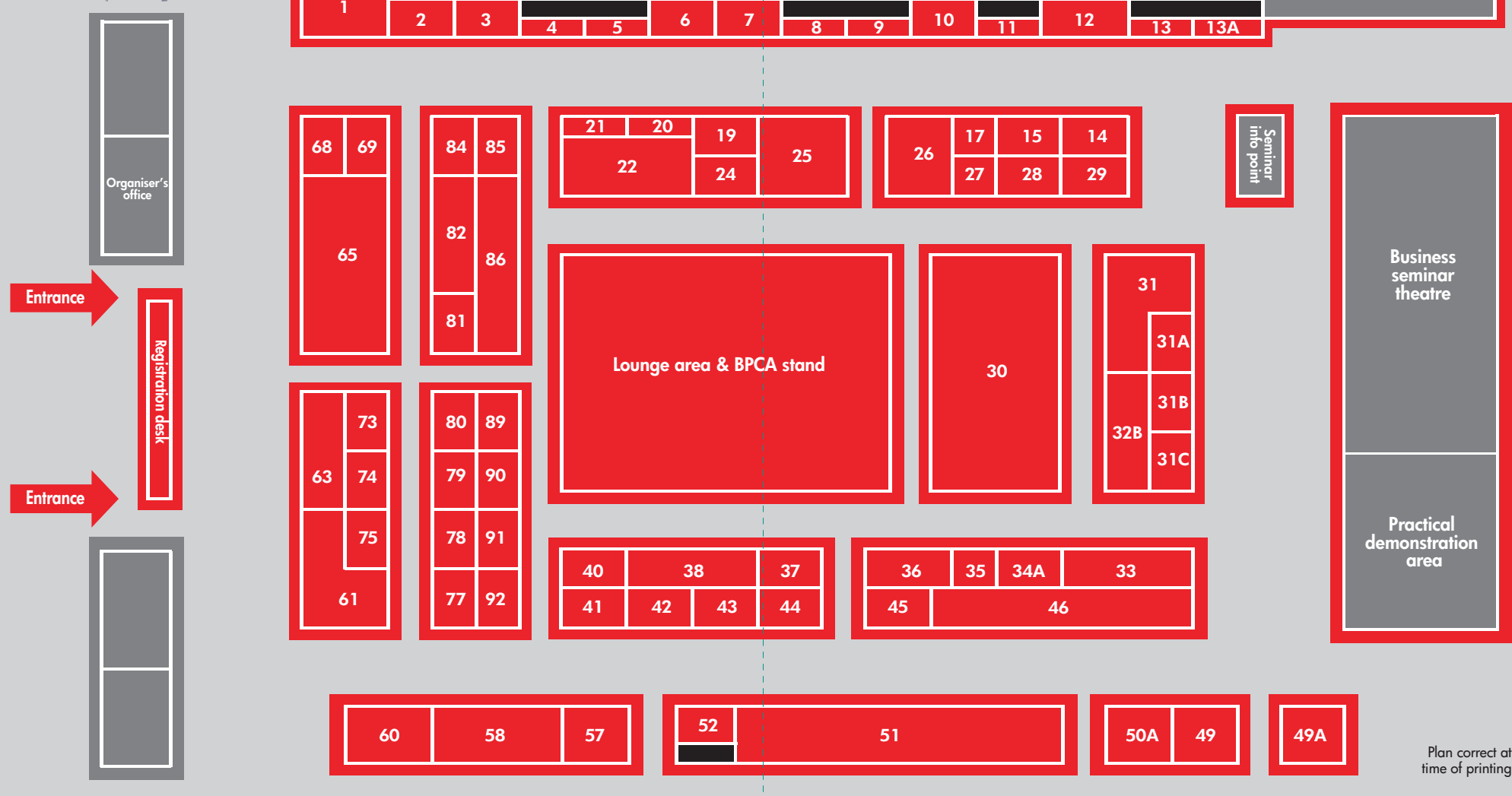
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pest 19

Organisation	Stand
AgriSense	33
Agropharm	1
Airofog Machinery	81
Alcochem Hygiene	31
AP&G	40
Azura Group	21
Babolna Bio	41
Barrettine Environmental	61
BASF Pest Control Solutions	30
BASIS PROMPT	37
Bayer Environmental Science	38
Bell Laboratories	22
Bird Deterrent Systems	13A
Bower Products	63
Bradshaw Bennett	24
Brandenburg UK	9
Certis Europe	34A
CRRU	68
DuPont Professional	2
Earthcare	43
EcoTrade Italy	14
Exosect	31a
Flybird Installations	9
GreenTrapOnline	13
HEM	49A
Hockley International	74
HQ Suppliers	80
Huck Nets	52
IGEBA Geraetebau	92
Industrial Pesticides	36
International Pest Control	10
JAFO	5
Killgerm Chemicals	65
Kness Mfg	44
Liphatech	32B

Pre-book to take exams

Pre-booked candidates can sit the RSPH/BPCA Award in Pest Management exam on the morning of 7 April. Also the practical element in the new RSPH/BPCA Level 2 Certificate in Pest Management can be taken during the event. To book your place call Tammy on 01332 225113 or email tammy@bpca.org.uk



Business theatre programme

Wednesday 6 April

10.00	BPCA: Our plans for your future Find out about BPCA's strategy for the next three years and hear of exciting initiatives targeting those who purchase pest control. Speaker: Simon Forrester BPCA chief executive
11.30	SUD and BPD: Just tell us how to get it right Have the goalposts on certification of pesticide users changed again? Find out what it all means for your business. Chair: Ian Pepper RAMPS (UK) Speakers: Paul Butt Natural England, Paul Chambers NFU, Dr Anne Buckenham Crop Protection Association
13.00	Discussion: The comprehensive spending review Changes to public sector pest control offer huge opportunities for servicing companies. The panel: Dave Oldbury Manchester City Council (chair), John Bell Rentokil, Dave Clements Pestokill & Ian Masterton Leeds City Council
14.15	Discussion: Understanding qualifications: the career path for PCOs What should the minimum standards be? How should CPD be delivered? Should there be apprenticeships for pest control? The panel: Simon Forrester BPCA (chair) Dr Mike Ayers Precision Pest Management, Trevor Green SX, Adrian Meyer, Acheta, Rob Simpson BASIS, Dr Chris Suter RSPH
15.30	Taking the pulse of UK pest control The results of the first-ever National UK Pest Management Survey will be unveiled. Organised by BASF Pest Control Solutions and <i>Pest</i> magazine the survey will benchmark public and private sector attitudes and intentions. Speakers from BASF and Pest magazine

Thursday 7 April

10.00	BPCA: Our plans for your future Find out about BPCA's strategy for the next three years and hear of exciting initiatives targeting those who purchase pest control. Speaker: Simon Forrester BPCA chief executive
11.15	Discussion: Pest control and the law Pest control operates in a minefield of sometimes conflicting and often confusing legislation. Discover safe paths through, and the consequences if it all goes wrong. The panel: Jonathan Peck Killgerm Group (chair), Dr Alan Buckle Reading University & RRAG chairman, Paul Butt Natural England & a local authority speaker
12.30	Taking the pulse of UK pest control The results of the first-ever National UK Pest Management Survey will be unveiled. Organised by BASF Pest Control Solutions and <i>Pest</i> magazine the survey will benchmark public and private sector attitudes and intentions. Speakers from BASF and Pest magazine
14.00	RAMPS (UK): An update An overview of progress so far regarding metallic phosphides in pest control. Speaker: Ian Pepper RAMPS (UK)

In the technical theatre

Continuous Professional Development (CPD) points will be available in the technical theatre as well.

There will be five seminars on each of the two days. Exhibitors have been invited to propose suitable topics for these sessions and to get involved in putting together the technical content. The best suggestions as chosen by the BPCA technical team will be the ones that are run during PestEx.

As *Pest* magazine went to press the final choice had not yet been made. Keep an eye on our website at www.pestmagazine.co.uk where we will publish details when they are available.

How to survey for profit

The practical demonstration area consists of three 'rooms' – a kitchen, a bedroom and an office. Here, visitors can earn CPD by conducting their own survey and completing a questionnaire.

Getting the survey right is the first step in profitable, professional pest control. BPCA's Kevin Higgins and Richard Moseley will be on hand to advise.

The demonstration areas will be open throughout both days of the event.

Organisation	Stand
Lodi UK	60
Mesto Spritzenfabrik	28
NPAP	69
NPTA	15
Orkin	86
Or.MA	91
P+L Systems	46
PelGar International	25
<i>Pest</i>	4
Pest Management Consultancy	79
PestWest	82
Pisys Digital	29
Plastdiversity	77
Proctor Brothers	85
RSPH	20
Russell IPM	58
ScanWise	31C
Shenzhen Longrau Technology	75
Silvandersson	7
Sitno	84
SPM Europe	86
Spray Systems	73
Starkeys Products	3
SX Environmental Supplies	26
Technicide	11
Telex (Hong Kong) Industry	27
The Bed Moat	90
Thermokill	45
WaspBane	89
Watertight International	31B
Xenex Associates	86

Find out how Layla started her business



At 16.00 on Day 1 of PestEx the Professional Women in Pest Management (PWIPM) group is inviting everyone along to hear from Layla Bennett and her falcon, Monty. A second speaker has yet to be confirmed. The presentations will be followed by a wine and cheese social. As **Pest** went to press the venue was yet to be allocated. We'll keep you posted via **Pest*** and the website.

Layla began working in bird control at the tender age of 16 and now, at the ripe old age of 23, runs her own business, Hawksdrift. In 2010 she appeared on the BBC's Dragon's Den.



Don't miss the presentation of the results from the first-ever National UK Pest Management survey which is being held at 14.15 on Day 1 and repeated at 12.30 on Day 2 in the Business theatre.

Speakers will be from BASF and **Pest** who jointly organised the survey.

Interested in starting your own business?



As PestEx closes on Wednesday evening Orkin is holding a franchise meeting in the boardroom at the Novotel London ExCel starting at 17.00. Contact tania@xenexassociates.com. Tel: 01403 738696 to book a place or call into the Xenex stand 86 during PestEx.

PestEx first-timers

Visiting the stands of your familiar suppliers and catching up with the news is always a feature of exhibitions such as PestEx. But it is also interesting to see who is exhibiting for the first time – what's new on their stands? **Pest** reviews some of this year's PestEx first timers. Go along to meet them and make them welcome.

Watertight International

www.watertightinternational.eu

Watertight International's easy-to-fit non-return valve has been designed to prevent properties from being flooded by backflow – the cause of 50% of all floods to properties. In addition, it enables pest controllers, plumbers and householders to use the valve to prevent rats from entering a property via outlet pipes.

The patented Watertight non-return valve can be fitted in minutes simply by pushing it into an outlet pipe that is accessible via an existing manhole/inspection chamber. There is no need to create a new inspection chamber, nor to carry out extensive remedial work to existing pipes.



SPM Europe

simon.henton@siangmay.com

SPM Europe provides a range of pest management products and technologies aimed at the professional user with a low environmental impact. The focus of SPM Europe is a branded business that is built on bird control products and a growing range of non-chemical control systems, technologies and products (devices).

The company is headquartered in Europe, with a warehouse and distribution operation based in the Czech Republic. The target market is the pest management and the building trades industries. Marketing and distribution is through appointed national distributors, with direct sales to major international pest management service companies. SPM Europe does not directly supply individual independent service companies.



GreenTrapOnline

www.greentraponline.com

GreenTrapOnline (GTO) is a privately-owned Danish company located in Aarhus. It develops and operates wireless electronic monitoring systems for professional users. The integrated solutions on offer include a range of detectors and communication platforms with data collection/storage and tools for documentation, reporting and alerting.

The system is developed to ensure a safe, targeted, eco-friendly and cost effective way of executing pest control. Future use extensions include the monitoring of temperature, humidity, leaks and insects.



Azura

www.azuragroup.com

Based in Essex, Azura provides mobile pest management software, called Az-One, to seamlessly manage contracts, jobs and visits.

With Az-One each technician has a PDA Smartphone from which they can 'beam back' and receive information to and from base throughout their working day. Back at the office, the workload is drastically reduced as all the information is received electronically.



JAFO

www.jafo.eu

Developed by Jafo from Sweden, Rat-Exx offers effective protection against rats in sewer systems. The Rat-Exx rat stop is placed in a horizontal sewer pipe within a customer's cellar/basement or in the ground. Blocking this single point of entry allows protection of the entire drainage system from penetration by rats.

The system is easy to install in the service sewer pipe, just like a standard fitting, and uses an electrical pulse generator that generates a 200-500 volt current approximately twice per second. When a rat enters the Rat-Exx, it receives a moderate electric shock that is not lethal, but is guaranteed to keep rats off the property. An easy, effective and environmentally friendly method.



HQ Suppliers

www.hygequip.com

With a UK base in Sheffield, HQ is a manufacturer of insect killers and glueboards for professional pest control solutions.

Their range of products include glueboard, electric and decorative insect killers, along with high quality UV lamps and boards for flying and crawling insects. Rodent glueboards for both rats and mice, as well as a range of mechanical rodent traps and boxes.

HQ uses a variety of materials to manufacture their boards so, depending on the application of the board, the glue density can be altered to fit any pest infestation. All glueboards are made in the EU so ensuring strict quality control standards and the use of high grade materials to formulate their adhesives. HQ operate from warehouses in Sheffield and Malaga, Spain with a distribution warehouse in Atlanta, USA.

DuPont Professional

www.dupont.com


Although previously seen at PestTech, this will be DuPont's debut at PestEx. Launched in 2010, Advion cockroach gel contains a new active ingredient (indoxacarb) with a novel mode of action. Studies show this unique formulation quickly attracts cockroaches and out-competes existing food sources.

The gel has a high consumption bait matrix based on a potent non-repellent active ingredient. What's more, it is effective against all common cockroach pest species, even gel-bait-averse ones.



ScanWise

www.scanwise.co.uk

Again seen at PestTech, ScanWise will have on display their WiseCam and WiseTrap. Used in tandem they create a rodent control plan, targeting key problem areas within a sewer system.

The WiseCam surveys the problem using infrared. The WiseTrap isolates the area of the sewer and systematically controls the infestation.

Plan your day to get the best from PestEx



It's a busy event so don't just turn up in a rush on the day. Try to find time to plan your campaign. Here are some thoughts to get you started:

- Read the business seminar programme on page 20 and note any that you want to go to. Double check the times when you arrive.
- Watch out for our **Pest*** PestEx Preview email (or check the **Pest** website) as we will publish the technical seminar programme as soon as it's available.
- Go to the PestEx website at www.pestex.org and pre-register.
- Check the exhibitor list, highlight those you must see and make a second list of those you'd like to talk to if time permits.
- If you need CPD points look out for details of the PestEx CPD trail questionnaire when you arrive.
- Are there any people you need to see who might also be visiting the event? Contact them and arrange a meeting.
- Network – keep up with old contacts and introduce yourself to other visitors.
- Set aside time to browse. There are some new faces (see left). Now's your chance to find out more about them.
- And finally don't forget your credit card. If you're parking at ExCel you'll need it. It's £10 for up to five hours, £15 for up to 15 hours!



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WorkingTogether

Green aims for gold

Green Compliance might be a name new in the world of pest control servicing, but, watch-out. New it might be, but ambitious it most definitely is.

Christmas Eve 2009. That was a key day in the history of Green Compliance plc. It was the day the company was officially 'born'. AIM-listed on the London Stock Exchange and with several million pounds of investment funding safely secured, the company was ready for off. So, it should come as no surprise, that in 2010, Green Compliance acquired the assets of no fewer than 12 different businesses.

Experienced management team

At the helm is Chief Executive Officer John Prowse who, prior to his work at Green Compliance, was Managing Director of Connaught's compliance business. Also with Connaught backgrounds are Group Sales and Marketing Director, Kevin Lacey, who previously worked with John Prowse, as well as Trevor Brennand who is the manager responsible for the pest control business.

Green Compliance describes itself as a company providing compliance-related business support services to a wide range of clients in both the public and private sectors in the UK. To be specific, their three areas of operation are: water treatment, hygiene and Legionella control; fire protection and fire extinguisher recycling and pest eradication, control and prevention. Group turnover is now around £20 million, with over 400 employees.

Spectacular growth

In 2010, in the pest control market alone, the company acquired three well-respected and long established regional pest control businesses. Midlands-based Envirocare in July, PestFree located in Northamptonshire in November, followed by Kent-based Enviroguard in December.

Spectacular growth indeed, but with it can come problems. Each business has to be integrated into one sleek, co-ordinated and profitable whole. No easy task.

With these facts in mind, **Pest** quizzed Group Sales and Marketing Director, Kevin Lacey about the company's aspirations and

longer term plans in the pest control market.

Making a mark

If Kevin's enthusiasm is anything to go by, Green Compliance is certainly out to make its mark.

"We bought Envirocare first as we wanted a decent sized footprint in the pest market to start-off with," explains Kevin. "We want to offer all our customers high levels of service and care. We need to be flexible and provide quality. The three pest businesses we have bought so far are all entrepreneurial and quick on their feet. By acquiring them we must be careful we don't destroy these attributes. We mustn't destroy the good will and value of what we bought."

Experts in their field

Laudable sentiments indeed, but continues Kevin: "Within these companies we value the quality of the staff and their length of service. They are all experts in their field. Yet we come with new ideas we want to bolt on. We recognised we needed to build our back-office platform before changing our public face. Preparation and planning is important – so here we have used external resources to put together such infrastructure items as a common IT system."

As to the future, the company will certainly rebrand these acquisitions under the Green Compliance name – but in a progressive and non-confrontational manner.

Kevin says the company is keen to establish nation-wide coverage, so watch-out for further acquisition announcements should suitable opportunities present themselves in the right geographic area.

"We view the UK market as highly fragmented. There are the 'big boys' (such as Rentokil and Ecolab) then a whole raft of smaller companies. We aim to create a mid-tier – big enough to cope with national customers, yet small enough to care," concludes Kevin.



Chief executive officer, John Prowse



Group sales and marketing director, Kevin Lacey



Trevor Brennand is responsible for the pest control part of the business

green
compliance



A new kid on the block!

Sixty years ago our native red squirrel (*Sciurus vulgaris*) was on the way to being replaced by the non-native invader from North America, the grey squirrel (*Sciurus carolinensis*).

Pest Technical Advisory Board member, Richard Strand from the Pest Information Consultancy, asks whether the same fate is about to overtake the greys?

The native British red squirrel is now restricted to just a few marginal habitats and even here continued survival is dependent on intervention by local naturalist groups. Is history repeating itself? Is the now cosmopolitan grey to be supplanted by the (relatively) new kid on the block, the black squirrel?

Possibly so, but there are significant differences between the circumstances surrounding the demise of the red squirrel as opposed to the apparent success of the black squirrel in some localities. The prime difference being that the grey and the black squirrel are polymorphic forms of the same species, whilst the red is an entirely different species.

The red lost out to the grey in several ways; it is smaller and less aggressive, it is very susceptible to the squirrel pox – carried by the grey but to which it long ago developed immunity, and, perhaps most importantly, the red was never as well suited to a life in deciduous woodland as is the grey, the former preferring coniferous forests.

There is a biological law that states that no two species can occupy the same ecological niche. Ultimately one will always displace the other. It is probable that the grey squirrel would have displaced the red even if squirrel pox had not been an issue.

Grey squirrels and black squirrels are the same species *Sciurus carolinensis*. It is believed that the different colouration is the result of a single mutation of the gene regulating the pigmentation of the coat, and happened in North America, possibly centuries ago. The chances of the same gene mutation occurring on both sides of the Atlantic are vanishingly small and so the presence of black squirrels in the UK is likely to be as a result of an American import years ago, perhaps to a private zoo.

The first recorded sighting of a black squirrel in the UK was near Letchworth in 1912. Until recently the town even boasted a pub named after the rodent – the Black Squirrel Inn! Twenty years later they were observed in Cambridgeshire. They are now found in a ribbon across Bedfordshire, Hertfordshire and Cambridgeshire.

It is clear that numbers are increasing, as is the range, with one reported sighting in the North East (though the photograph was not that convincing). In some populations in these counties black squirrels now outnumber greys. Total numbers are estimated to be

as many as 25,000 (estimated UK population of the grey squirrel is two million).

In addition to the coat colour, are there any other differences? Some observers have reported that black squirrels are slightly larger than their grey cousins although biologists suggest that this may be down to age differences between the individuals being compared or just a 'perception' that black squirrels are larger. Other sources have indicated that testosterone levels in male black squirrels are higher making them more aggressive, and even more attractive to female grey squirrels. It is emphasised that the evidence of variations in these and other features is, at best, anecdotal.

Will the black form ever replace the grey completely? Well possibly yes. Dr Alison Thomas and Dr Helen McRobie, from the Department of Life Sciences at Anglia Ruskin University in Cambridge, have found that the black and the grey genes are co-dominant – when a black and a grey gene are paired the resultant squirrel has a black/brown appearance; with both copies of the critical melanocortin receptor gene paired, a squirrel with a jet-black coat will result whilst two grey genes must be paired to produce the normal grey colour.

In theory then, as black and grey populations intermingle and interbreed, all else being equal, it will be the black/brown form that will prevail with variations ranging from jet black to the now common grey. Fifty years from now there may be naturalist groups in corners of the country working hard to preserve the last remaining 'grey' squirrels. The operative words though are 'all else being equal'. There may be strong environmental factors that favour and select for the grey morph. Camouflage from predators may be an example. The mottled grey appearance of the squirrel may help it merge in with the typical variegated and 'busy' background of the arboreal environment in which they live. Will black squirrels stand out against this background making them an easy target for predators? If that, or something similar, is the case then surely natural selection will favour the grey. Time will tell.

This is an article for pest controllers in *Pest* magazine, so the \$64,000 question remains, do black squirrels attract protection that grey squirrels don't? The answer is simple. Blacks and greys are different morphs of the same species, that is all. As such, black squirrels attract no more protection than their grey cousins.



Squirrels fall-foul of the law

Late last year, police in Swindon issued a public appeal and undertook house-to-house enquiries in their three-week hunt to track down 'vandals' who had severed, or damaged, the ABS brake cables of seven cars and cut-through phone cables.

But two weeks later the investigation was abandoned when it emerged the culprits were grey squirrels! Local contractors were called in to resolve the problem.

RSPCA withdraws cruelty proceedings

The case prompted by Norris Atthey who, in effect, challenged the RSPCA to prosecute him for drowning a grey squirrel has been dropped.

Mr Atthey, having read about the prosecution of a Staffordshire window cleaner who caught and subsequently drowned a grey squirrel, felt sufficiently incensed that he publically announced in his local paper (the Morpeth Herald) that that he too had drowned a grey squirrel. So, in effect, challenging the RSPCA to prosecute him too.

The RSPCA rose to the bait. Two policemen arrested him and he was held in the police cells for nine hours before eventually

being charged under the Animal Welfare Act 2006 for causing unnecessary suffering to an animal.

The RSPCA spent many thousands of pounds preparing the case, including an expert witness report, which came to court on 14 January. However, at the start of the hearing the RSPCA announced that they were dropping the charges, saying that the only evidence was Mr Atthey's own statement in the local paper.

The District Judge, Stephen Earl, ordered that as Mr Atthey had, in effect, brought the case upon himself, he should pay his own substantial costs. The incident continues as Mr Atthey has now lodged a complaint against the police for false arrest.

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Goodbye UKPCO. Hello UKPCO Ltd



The first Annual General meeting of the new UK Pest Controllers Organisation (UKPCO) was held in Nottingham on 19 February

On what proved to be a cold, wet and snowy day, 19 members of the UKPCO descended on Nottingham University Hospital. From all accounts it certainly proved to be an interesting day.



Adam Juson was elected chairman of UKPCO Ltd

Hardly surprising, as since their last AGM in February 2009 there had been a split in the ranks with the departure of Andy Beddoes to form UK Pest Controllers in conjunction with his son, Sam.

Turning over a new leaf, first on the agenda was the dissolution of UKPCO ('the partnership') followed by the establishment of UKPCO Ltd. As a limited company, this ensures their assets are now secure and provides a legal footing for UKPCO to move forward as a 'not for profit company'.

The officers of the new organisation were elected. Adam Juson remains as chairman with Adrian Batty as vice-chair, Tony Baker as secretary, Danny Ford as treasurer and Dave Parnell responsible for training co-ordination.

Slight changes to the membership requirements were agreed. The public liability insurance requirement was raised to no less than £5 million and the RSPH/BPCA Level 2 Award/Certificate in Pest Control was endorsed as a minimum qualification, plus a commitment to CPD. Associate membership is to remain at two years, but commitment must be shown to take the RSPH Award/Certificate in the first year. Members will also be more committed to mentoring associate members wherever possible.

Local authority members are welcome, so long as they comply with the membership requirements. A new membership category of 'specialist' member is to be considered so as to include those who specialise in one particular area only, for example in bedbugs or wildlife management.

It was declared that UKPCO is no longer a buyers' consortium. For the future, there is to be a committee newsletter, produced quarterly to improve communication. The group thanked Ian Woods for the

speed and skill with which he set up the new UKPCO forum, and the design of the forthcoming UKPCO website. This will detail member companies, as well as promoting to potential customers the benefits of using UKPCO members.

For anyone interested in UKPCO, a warm invitation has been issued to join their lively web forum which can be accessed at www.ukpco.org.uk

TF 34

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York Minster gets pigeon protection

For years pigeons have made themselves at home roosting on the famous Rose Window of York Minster – one of the UK's finest gothic churches.

It's been an ideal spot for the pigeons, as from the pavement below there is a virtually continuous supply of dropped sandwiches and food scraps from the tourists who obligingly flock to York all year round.

Using an EPL Skylift, Steve Hornby of Halifax-based Reactive Group Services was able to install stone coloured netting from Network to keep the pigeons at bay.

At the same time the stonework was also inspected for damage by York Minister's team of master stonemasons.



Can you pass the
pest test?

Take the Pest Test

BASIS has made two PROMPT CPD points available if you can demonstrate that you have improved your knowledge, understanding and technical know-how by passing the **Pest Test** and answering all our questions correctly. So read through our articles on gulls and the latest results from the NPTA and NPAP surveys in this issue and answer the questions below.

Try to answer them all in one sitting and without referring back to the articles. **Take care as some questions may have more than one correct answer so tick all the answers you believe are correct.**

SEND COMPLETED QUESTIONS to:

Pest Magazine, Foxhill, Stanford on Soar, Loughborough, Leicestershire LE12 5PZ. We will contact you with your result and, if all your answers are correct, we will credit the CPD points to you.

1 How many pairs of roof-nesting Herring gulls does the RSPB estimate there are in the UK? a) 2,000 c) 200,000	b) 20,000 d) 2,000,000	4 What percentage of local authorities are now charging for some of their rat control services, according to the NPTA survey? a) Over 20% c) Over 60%	b) Over 40% d) Over 80%
2 In urban areas, why does gull management take place? a) To prevent buildings being defaced c) To reduce the noise nuisance caused by nesting birds	b) To ensure there are plenty at the seaside for tourists to see d) To prevent aggressive gulls attacking people	5 Which of the following are the main causes of increased rodent problems according to the NPTA survey? a) Poorly managed domestic waste c) Over-feeding of wild birds	b) Lack of interest by householders d) The perceived high price of rodenticides
3 Which organisation can issue a licence allowing the removal of eggs under certain circumstances? a) RSPB c) DEFRA	b) Natural England d) BPCA	6 By 2009, what percentage of local authorities had given-up providing pest control? a) 1% c) 20%	b) 10% d) 30%

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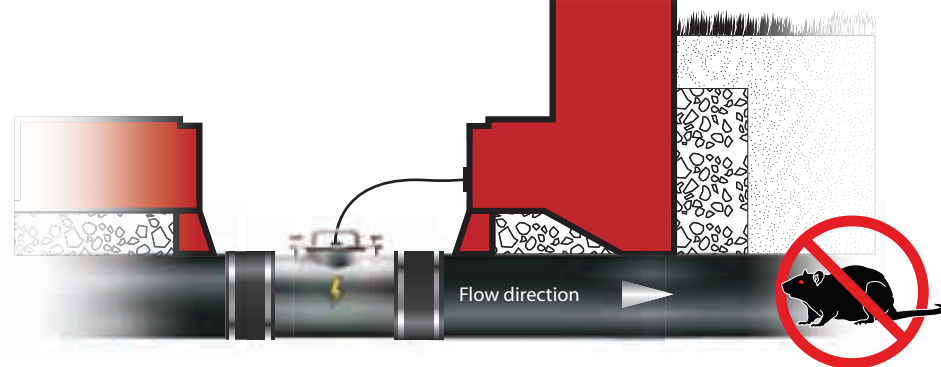
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FEATURE
New firearms scheme

Phone before you fire

Imagine the scene. You and some colleagues are out in the countryside on a rabbit shoot, as requested by the local farmer. You have done everything to the letter of the law – your air-rifle is one not requiring a licence, you have written permission from the landowner and you are fully aware of the landowner's boundaries.

Suddenly – all hell breaks loose. There's a police helicopter hovering overhead, instructions boom out for you to drop your weapons and when you look around you discover you're surrounded by at least four armed-to-the-teeth members of the county police armed response team. Help!

Police in this sort of situation are highly trained and take no prisoners. How are they to know your well-intended rabbit cull is not a gang of armed terrorists about to descend upon the local school? Any pest controller who has experienced this scenario can vouch for it being a very scary experience.

With the objective of preventing such unnecessary armed deployments, Leicestershire Constabulary has set-up a scheme entitled the Voluntary Notification of Shooting Events. Believed to be the first such scheme in the country, it makes it easy for the shooting community, including professional pest controllers, to notify them of any forthcoming shooting events.

A central phone number is available, or email address, for any shoot organiser to make contact, advise of their activities and be given an incident report number. Details concerning the planned



The armed response team includes helicopters equipped with the latest technology, including thermal imaging

activity are logged and, should any well-meaning member of the general public phone-in to report a sighting of men with firearms, the police can cross-check their log. It may still mean the police have to attend the scene to check it out, but it should prevent deployment of the armed unit.

Many other county forces are now showing interest in the Leicestershire Constabulary idea. As PC Graham Priestnall of the Tactical Dogs and Firearms Unit explains: "Since establishing the scheme in April 2009 the number of shooting notifications to our control centre has risen from 390 to over 1,000 in 2010. This has led to an 80% reduction of armed deployment to suspicious events in rural areas."

At an open day held recently at the Leicestershire Police HQ, it was explained how the sensitivity of the general public towards firearms has radically increased – notably following the Derrick Bird



A member of the armed response team – definitely not a bobby to trifle with

rampage in Cumbria. Rural crime has risen as well as the number of urban people now living in the country. When once rural inhabitants would have dismissed people walking in fields and sounds of gun shots as pigeon, rabbit or pheasant shooting, now people are increasingly phoning in with reports of 'seeing someone with a gun'.

Within cities, the perceptions of noise are very different. Here the general public takes the sound of firearms to be unlawful activity.

So for the professional pest controller the moral of the story is very much – it's good practice, and certainly wise, to advise your local police before undertaking any activity involving firearms and shooting.



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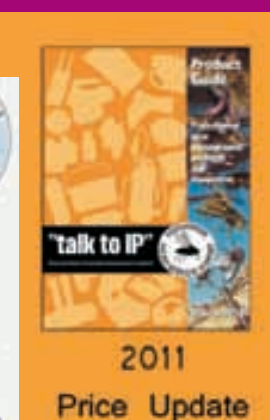
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REFERENCE
New catalogues

It's catalogue time!

The major suppliers have been busy updating their product catalogues ready for PestEx. As you can see, a good number of them are now printed and ready to come out to pest controllers. Of note is the first combined Brandenburg Huck Nets catalogue following the announced of their strategic partnership in January. Barretine is once again offering a greener alternative – its CD version saves a number of trees from being pulped into paper!

If you've not had your copy of these yet then pick them up at PestEx.



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Best new product

Use PestEx to spot those impressive new introductions

Nominations can now be made for the **Pest** Best Product Award 2011. There's usually plenty of new products on display at PestEx so, whilst you are browsing, keep an eye out for new introductions that are worthy of this year's top accolade

"Remember the award recognises the product that our readers feel has made the greatest improvement to their lives and/or working practices," explains **Pest** editor, Frances McKim.

An innovative market

Pest control is a very inventive and resourceful market. People are always coming-up with new ideas to make practical pest controllers' lives easier or more professional.

New ways of proofing to keep pests out, more discreet and precise ways of applying baits and gels or controlling flying insects, better ways of scaring pests away and improved pest monitoring and recording systems. Nor must we forget the new chemical solutions including new delivery methods, formulations or mixtures of pesticides to offer a greater range of target pests, or speedier results.

A good example is last year's winner (pictured right), Romax Rat CP from Barretine Environmental. Based on an 'old' active, coumatetralyl, but with a special 'soft block' formulation this bait proved to be easy to use and effective and attracted many positive comments from readers, as well as the most votes.

Pest readers are in the driving seat. You nominate the products then you get the chance to vote for the one you feel is the most innovative – the product which has made the greatest improvement to your life and/or your working practices.

Nomination form

I would like to nominate this/these products(s):

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2

3

4

5

Name:

Organisation:

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SEND YOUR COMPLETED FORM to **Pest Magazine, Foxhill, Stanford on Soar, Loughborough, Leicestershire LE12 5PZ**

For all the legal stuff visit www.pestmagazine.co.uk/content/newsitem.aspx?id=544

Here's what is happening:

- **31 January 2011** – **Pest** Best New Product Award announced;
- **31 January to 31 August** – **Pest** readers can nominate their selected products;
- **1 September** – product shortlist drawn-up from nominations;
- **1 September to 28 October** – readers vote to find the winner;
- **31 October** – all votes counted;
- **2 November** – award announced at PestTech.

Qualifying period

Any product launched between 1 September 2010 and 31 August 2011 can be nominated, so that includes all the new products launched at PestTech last November.

So, nominations for the best new products 2011 are now open! Use the form to put-forward the products you think are best.



Rules of engagement

- 1 Only commercial pest control products can be nominated. Services, promotional schemes, special offers and the like are excluded;
- 2 Products nominated must have been launched after 1 September 2010 and before midnight on 31 August 2011;
- 3 Products must have been fully commercially available during the time period shown in 2 above. Products supplied free for trials purposes cannot be entered;
- 4 Only products sold in the UK are eligible;
- 5 Entries must be made via the official printed nomination form or by email following the format specified on the **Pest** website;
- 6 Readers can submit up to five products per nomination form but can only nominate the same product once. You can send in an unlimited number of nomination forms;
- 7 Readers may vote for their top two products, but may only submit one voting form. Second choices will be taken into account in the event of a tie;
- 8 Entries submitted after midnight on 28 October 2011 will not be counted.



Gel capitalises on mice behaviour



Containing the active substance brodifacoum, comes Vertex Contact Gel. Developed by PelGar, they claim it is the only contact gel available that will successfully control mice resistant to bromadiolone, difenacoum, warfarin, chlorophacinone and other first generation anticoagulants.

The gel does not need to be directly ingested as a bait as it is designed to be groomed from the mouse's fur during their normal cleaning behaviour. So it doesn't matter if the mouse won't eat your bait. All that is needed to achieve mouse kill, is for the unlucky rodent to just walk through, or brush past, the Vertex gel during its everyday daily life. As PelGar points out, this means Vertex Contact Gel is perfect for the control of behaviourally resistant mice.

By reducing the level of active material in the gel to 50 ppm, the non-target hazard is minimized, whilst retaining the mouse killing capability of brodifacoum. PelGar calculate that mice only need to ingest 200 milligrams of the gel to swallow a lethal dose.

www.pelgar.co.uk

Three aerosols from SX

With the warmer weather approaching, how long will it be before wasps and flies come to the fore? In preparation, SX has just introduced three new aerosol products.

SXPRO Single Shot, containing permethrin and tetramethrin, is a traditional aerosol designed for use indoors against crawling and flying insects – such as flies, wasps and fleas.



www.pestcontrolonline.com

SXPRO Wasp Nest Destroyer also contains permethrin and tetramethrin, yet this produces a foaming spray suitable to use for wasps and the treatment of their nests. The foam can be applied at a distance.

Finally, SXPRO Flying and Crawling Insect Killer does exactly what it says on the can! Containing d-phenothrin and tetramethrin, it also produces a foaming spray.

New and in convenient sizes

Designed for ease of use, Sakarat Bromabait place-packs come in 100g sachets. Containing bromadiolone on a whole wheat base, they are effective against rats and mice both indoors and out say Killgerm. Also available in 2.5kg buckets and 18kg bags.



Sakarat Bromakill, based on the active substance bromadiolone, comes on a rolled oat base. Soft in texture, fibrous in nature and with lower starch content, this makes it highly attractive and palatable.

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An article recently published in the *Cardiology Journal** suggests that the number of people killed in the UK each year by wasp stings could number in excess of 1000.

It now appears that wasp stings can trigger heart attacks in a number of susceptible people several days after being stung. This is known as

Kounis Syndrome.

WaspBane is the only high efficiency wasp trap on the market proven to reduce risk by up to 97.5% compared to other traps.



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*Journal of Allergy, Immunology and Clinical Immunology, 2008, Vol. 116, No. 3, pp. 208-209

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	DAY	EVENT	VENUE	FIND OUT MORE
MAY	12	NPTA Regional Conference	Warrenpoint, Co Down Northern Ireland	www.npta.org.uk
	19-20	ConExPest	Krakow, Poland	www.conexpest.pl
	19-20	Europest	Krakow, Poland	roland@cepa-europe.org
	19	Pest Control & Public Health	Portland Place, London	crobins@rsph.org.uk
AUGUST	7-10	7th International Conference on Urban Pests	Ouro Preto, Brazil	www.icup2011.com
SEPTEMBER	12-15	6th European Mosquito Control Association Workshop	Budapest, Hungary	www.emca2011.com
OCTOBER	12	NPTA Regional Conference	Manchester	www.npta.org.uk
	19-22	PestWorld 2011	New Orleans, USA	www.npmapestworld.org
	26-28	A Pest Odyssey 2011	British Museum, London	www.pestodyssey.org
NOVEMBER	2	PestTech 2011	National Motorcycle Museum, Birmingham	www.pesttech.org.uk
	2	Pest Control News dinner	Windmill Village Hotel	editor@pestcontrolnews.com
	16-17	Parasitec Iberica & Tecnoplagas	Hotel Auditorium, Madrid, Spain	www.parasitec.org

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- Help prevent the accidental spilling of bait;
- Let you inspect bait easily to see if rodents are feeding



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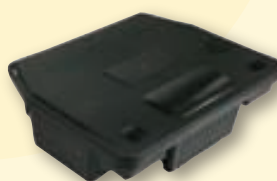
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