



May
2023



Bite-Sized Food Safety

Food safety resources
for front-line managers
to train food workers

Controlling Restaurant Pests

ASK: Who is primarily responsible for controlling pests in a food facility?

ANSWER: The food establishment's employees are the facility's first line of defense in controlling pests like roaches, flies, weevils, ants, mice, and rats. They are able to monitor for pest activity every day. They can do much more than a pest control company to eliminate food, water, and harborage for pests.



[This Photo](#) by Unknown Author is licensed under [CC BY-SA](#)

ASK: What is the most important thing employees can do to control pests in a food facility?

ANSWER: Regular and thorough cleaning removes spills and food debris that pests can feed on. It is best for employees to "clean as they go" rather than to wait until the end of the day or shift to clean. Trash cans should be kept covered when not in active use. Take trash out frequently. Never leave it inside overnight. Never leave dirty dishes overnight. There should be a cleaning schedule for areas and equipment that do not get cleaned every day.



[This Photo](#) by Unknown Author is licensed under [CC BY-ND](#)

ASK: What other ways can employees reduce the food available to pests?

ANSWER: As much as possible, keep food products in vermin-proof containers such as plastic containers with tight fitting lids for things like flour, grains, or sugar. Rotate food stocks regularly using the FIFO (First In, First Out) method. Immediately discard any food products contaminated by pests.



[This Photo](#) by Unknown Author is licensed under [CC BY-NC](#)

ASK: What are the two most important things employees can do to keep pests from getting into a food facility?

ANSWER: 1) All incoming deliveries should be carefully inspected to be sure that pests aren't "hitchhiking a ride" into the food facility. Cockroaches are often introduced into food facilities in cardboard boxes from suppliers, and 2) Keep all exterior doors closed as much as possible. Propping doors open for deliveries, to take out the trash, or for ventilation in the summertime is an invitation for insects and rodents to come in.



ASK: What areas frequently provide harborage for pests? What can employees do about it?

ANSWER: Most pests like warm, dark places with easy access to food and water and plenty of places to hide. Cluttered storage areas and closets, areas under sinks, in cracks and crevices, and inside walls where there are pipes penetrating the wall are favorite places for pests. Removing clutter from closets and storage areas and sealing cracks and crevices and around pipes eliminates harborage for many pests. Also, promptly unpacking boxes that deliveries come in and then taking the cardboard outside for recycling or trash is helpful. Regular cleaning of floor drains to remove organic debris will help eliminate the breeding of drain flies.



[This Photo](#) by Unknown Author is licensed under [CC BY](#)

ASK: How should employees monitor a food establishment for signs of a pest infestation?

ANSWER: Employees should 1) Look for signs of insects or rodents and report their location to management. Employees may observe rodent droppings or hair, rodent rub marks, or insect droppings or body parts in addition to the actual pests. Glue traps are useful in catching both insects and rodents, 2) Listen for indications of pest activity such as insects buzzing, rodents scurrying across drop ceilings, or the sounds of gnawing in storeroom areas, and 3) Smell for unusual smells like the ammonia smell of rodent urine or the oily, musty smell of cockroaches.



[This Photo](#) by Unknown Author is licensed under [CC BY-NC](#)

ASK: Can employees apply pesticides inside a food establishment?

ANSWER: Using pesticides is the last line of defense in an integrated pest management (IPM) plan. Most pesticides used in restaurants are restricted use pesticides that can only be legally applied by a Certified Pest Control Applicator. In fact, many pesticides are entirely prohibited for use in food establishments. Pesticides should only be applied when there is no active food preparation going on and all foods are covered. A pest control professional can do the best job of determining what pesticides can be safely used and will be most effective. For these reasons, it best when all pesticide application is done by pest control professionals when the establishment is closed and no food preparation is going on.



ASK: What improvements can a building owner make to help keep pests from entering a food facility?

ANSWER: A building owner can prevent the entry of pests into a facility by installing tight-fitting sweeps on the bottom of exterior doors to prevent rodents from crawling under the doors. They can seal all openings to the inside of the building from the outside. Mice can squeeze through a hole as small as a dime. They can install air curtains above exterior doors to prevent insects from flying in when the exterior doors are opened



This Photo by Unknown Author is licensed under [CC BY-SA](#)

ASK: Can light traps be used to catch flies in a food establishment?

ANSWER: Yes, provided that they are not located directly over food preparation or service areas where insect parts may fall into the food.



ASK: What can a building owner do to eliminate harborage for pests around the exterior of a food facility?

ANSWER: They can eliminate harborage for rodents near the building by removing weeds, dense shrubbery, and debris from around the building perimeter. They can also locate trash cans, dumpsters, recycling bins, and grease barrels away from the exterior walls of the building. They can ensure that there is adequate dumpster capacity to hold all the trash with the lids closed. They can see that the trash/dumpster area is cleaned regularly with a pressure washer.



This Photo by Unknown Author is licensed under [CC BY](#)