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Professional Resources for Care, Catering & Hospitality

FREE PROFESSIONAL RESOURCE

PEST PREVENTION AND CONTROL IN CARE CATERING

A Practical Guide for Care Staff

Knowledge Hub Resource 086

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INTRODUCTION

This free professional guide explains how catering staff can help prevent, recognise and respond to pest activity in care-catering environments.

It covers common pests, warning signs, delivery and premises checks, safe food storage, cleaning, waste control, reporting concerns and protecting food when pest activity is suspected.

FREE PROFESSIONAL RESOURCE

Catering, Food Safety & Kitchen Compliance Resources

Suitable for care home cooks, chefs, kitchen assistants, catering managers and staff responsible for receiving, storing, preparing or serving food.

IMPORTANT

This guide supports awareness and good practice.

Staff must follow their organisation's food-safety management system, pest-control procedures, reporting arrangements and instructions provided by an authorised pest-control contractor.

Catering staff must not place, move or interfere with pest-control chemicals, traps or bait unless they are trained and authorised to do so.

WHY EFFECTIVE PEST CONTROL MATTERS

Pests can contaminate food, packaging, equipment and food-contact surfaces.

They may carry harmful microorganisms and leave behind:

- Droppings.
- Urine.
- Hairs or feathers.
- Eggs or larvae.
- Insect bodies.
- Nesting materials.
- Dirt and debris.

• Damage to packaging.

Pests can also damage buildings, electrical wiring, equipment and stored products.

In care settings, effective pest prevention is particularly important because residents may be more vulnerable to serious illness caused by contaminated food.

COMMON PESTS IN CATERING ENVIRONMENTS

Pests that may affect food premises include:

RATS AND MICE

Rodents can enter through small gaps, damaged doors, drains and service openings.

They may contaminate food and surfaces through droppings, urine, hairs and contact with their bodies.

COCKROACHES

Cockroaches may hide in warm, dark and humid areas, including behind equipment, near pipework and around drains.

They can move between contaminated areas and food-preparation surfaces.

FLIES AND FLYING INSECTS

Flies can transfer contamination from waste, drains and other dirty areas onto food and equipment.

STORED-PRODUCT INSECTS

Beetles, moths, weevils and larvae may infest flour, cereals, rice, dried foods, herbs, spices and other stored products.

BIRDS

Birds may enter through open doors, windows, damaged roofs or unscreened openings. Their droppings, feathers and nesting materials can contaminate food areas.

OTHER PESTS

Ants and other insects may also enter food premises in search of food, water or shelter.

SIGNS OF PEST ACTIVITY

Catering staff should remain alert for:

- Live or dead insects.
- Rodent droppings.
- Insect droppings or spotting.
- Gnawed food or packaging.
- Holes in walls, doors or containers.
- Grease or smear marks along walls.
- Small footprints in dust.
- Nests or nesting materials.
- Eggs, larvae, maggots or webbing.
- Unusual scratching, buzzing or movement.
- Damaged sacks, boxes or food containers.
- Unexplained food spillages.
- Strong or unusual odours.
- Feathers or bird droppings.
- Sightings reported by staff, residents or visitors.

A single sign should not be ignored. Early reporting can prevent a small problem from becoming a serious infestation.

HOW PESTS ENTER FOOD PREMISES

Pests may enter through:

- Open or poorly fitting doors.
- Damaged windows or screens.
- Holes around pipes and cables.

• Cracks in walls, floors or ceilings.

• Damaged roofs.

• Uncovered drains.

• Ventilation openings.

• Food deliveries.

• Packaging, pallets or storage containers.

• Waste areas.

• External vegetation or accumulated rubbish.

Buildings should be maintained in good condition to restrict pest access and remove potential hiding or breeding places.

CHECKING FOOD DELIVERIES

Pests can enter catering premises in food, packaging, crates or delivery vehicles.

When receiving a delivery:

• Check packaging for holes, gnawing or damage.

• Look for insects, larvae, webbing or droppings.

• Check sacks, cardboard boxes and outer packaging carefully.

• Look for signs of moisture or contamination.

• Check that products are sealed correctly.

• Examine pallets and reusable containers where appropriate.

• Keep delivered food off the floor.

• Report any suspicious signs immediately.

Do not accept a delivery showing evidence of pest activity or contamination.

Follow the organisation’s procedure for rejecting the delivery and recording the reason.

SAFE FOOD STORAGE

Good storage practices reduce food sources and hiding places for pests.

Catering staff should:

• Store food in suitable sealed containers.

• Keep food off the floor.

• Keep storage areas clean, dry and orderly.

• Rotate stock using the organisation's approved system.

• Remove damaged or leaking packages promptly.

• Clean spillages immediately.

• Avoid overcrowding shelves.

• Leave sufficient access for cleaning and inspection.

• Check rarely used stock regularly.

• Keep food containers closed when not in use.

• Inspect dry goods for insects, larvae or webbing.

• Separate any food suspected of contamination.

Food should never be stored in a way that prevents staff from checking behind or beneath shelving.

CLEANING AND HOUSEKEEPING

Food debris, grease, standing water and clutter can attract pests.

Good housekeeping includes:

• Cleaning food spillages immediately.

• Cleaning beneath and behind movable equipment.

• Removing crumbs and debris from shelves and cupboards.

• Keeping floors, walls and storage areas clean.

• Cleaning drains as required by the organisation's procedure.

• Avoiding accumulations of unused packaging.

• Removing cardboard and waste promptly.

• Keeping cleaning equipment clean and stored correctly.

• Repairing leaking taps or pipework promptly.

• Ensuring no food is left exposed overnight.

Cleaning schedules should include areas that are difficult to reach or inspect.

Cleaning alone will not eliminate an established infestation, but it removes food and shelter that allow pests to survive.

WASTE AND EXTERNAL AREAS

Poorly managed waste can attract rodents, insects and birds.

Staff should:

• Place waste in suitable containers.

• Keep waste-container lids closed.

• Avoid allowing bins to overflow.

• Clean and disinfect waste containers regularly.

• Remove food waste from kitchen areas promptly.

• Keep internal and external waste areas tidy.

• Clean spillages around waste containers.

• Keep waste away from food deliveries and storage areas.

• Report damaged bins or missing lids.

• Avoid leaving unwanted equipment or clutter outside.

External areas should be kept free from excessive weeds, rubbish and materials that could provide food or shelter for pests.

MAINTAINING THE BUILDING

Structural defects can allow pests to enter and hide.

Report problems such as:

• Gaps beneath external doors.

• Damaged door seals.

• Broken windows or screens.

• Holes around pipes and cables.

• Cracks in walls or floors.

• Damaged vents.

• Missing drain covers.

• Leaking pipes.

• Damaged ceilings or roofs.

• Defective waste-storage areas.

Repairs should be completed promptly by an authorised person.

Temporary measures must not create another food-safety risk.

WHAT TO DO IF YOU SEE A PEST

If a pest or evidence of pest activity is found:

• Stop work in the affected area where necessary.

• Protect exposed food immediately.

• Inform the catering manager or responsible person.

• Record what was seen and where it was found.

• Do not touch droppings, dead pests, traps or bait with bare hands.

• Do not move contaminated items through clean food areas unnecessarily.

• Keep staff away from affected food and surfaces.

• Follow instructions for isolating the area.

• Preserve relevant packaging or evidence if requested.

• Allow the responsible person to contact the pest-control contractor.

Do not attempt to catch, poison or treat pests unless trained and authorised.

PROTECTING FOOD AND EQUIPMENT

When pest activity is suspected, the responsible person should assess:

• Whether food has been contaminated.

• Whether packaging has been damaged.

• Whether equipment or utensils have been affected.

• Whether food-contact surfaces require cleaning and disinfection.

• Whether stored ingredients need to be isolated.

• Whether food preparation should stop.

• Whether another safe preparation area is available.

• Whether food must be discarded.

Potentially contaminated food must not be served.

Never attempt to make food safe by removing visible contamination from the surface.

PEST-CONTROL CONTRACTORS

An organisation may employ a competent pest-control contractor to inspect the premises and manage pest activity.

The contractor may:

• Inspect the building and external areas.

• Identify the type and extent of pest activity.

• Position monitoring devices or authorised treatments.

• Recommend repairs and preventive action.

• Provide written visit reports.

• Arrange follow-up inspections.

• Advise when an affected area can safely return to use.

Staff should cooperate with authorised contractors but must not interfere with traps, monitoring points or bait stations.

Any recommendations should be reviewed and acted upon by the responsible manager.

PEST-CONTROL CHEMICALS AND BAIT

Pest-control products may be hazardous if used incorrectly.

Pest-control bait, sprays and chemicals must never be allowed to contact:

• Food.

• Food packaging.

• Utensils.

• Crockery.

• Food-contact surfaces.

• Catering equipment.

• Cleaning materials used in food areas.

Only trained and authorised people should use pest-control products.

Products must be stored and used according to legal requirements, manufacturer instructions and organisational procedures.

RECORD KEEPING

Pest-control records may include:

- Routine inspection results.
- Staff pest sightings.
- Rejected deliveries.
- Contractor visit reports.
- Locations of monitoring devices.
- Treatments carried out.
- Chemicals or bait used by authorised persons.
- Structural defects identified.
- Repairs completed.
- Food or packaging discarded.
- Cleaning and disinfection completed.
- Corrective actions and follow-up visits.

Records should be accurate, current and stored so they can be reviewed during management checks, audits or inspections.

COMMON MISTAKES TO AVOID

Do not:

- Ignore a single pest sighting.
- Remove droppings without reporting them.
- Continue using food with damaged packaging.
- Accept deliveries showing signs of infestation.
- Leave food or waste uncovered.
- Move traps or bait stations.

- Use domestic pest sprays in food areas.
- Place poison or bait without authorisation.
- Store food directly on the floor.
- Allow bins to overflow.
- Assume cleaning alone will resolve an infestation.
- Reopen an affected area without approval.
- Hide pest evidence because of concern about an inspection.

PEST PREVENTION CHECKLIST

☐ Deliveries are checked for pest damage.

☐ Food is stored in sealed, suitable containers.

☐ Food is kept off the floor.

☐ Storage areas are clean, dry and orderly.

☐ Spillages are cleaned immediately.

☐ Waste containers are closed and managed correctly.

☐ External areas are kept tidy.

☐ Doors, windows, drains and service openings are maintained.

☐ Difficult-to-reach areas are cleaned and inspected.

☐ Staff know the signs of common pests.

☐ Pest sightings are reported promptly.

☐ Suspected food is isolated and not served.

☐ Traps, chemicals and bait are left to authorised people.

☐ Contractor recommendations and corrective actions are recorded.

KEY MESSAGE

Effective pest control begins with prevention, regular checks and prompt reporting.

Keep food protected, maintain clean and orderly premises, inspect deliveries, manage waste correctly and report every sign of pest activity.

Never serve potentially contaminated food or use pest-control chemicals unless trained and authorised.

OFFICIAL FURTHER INFORMATION

Food Standards Agency – Safer Food Better Business: Pest Control

https://www.food.gov.uk/document/sfbb-cross-contamination-06-pest-control

Food Standards Agency – Food Hygiene for Businesses

https://www.food.gov.uk/food-hygiene

Food Standards Agency – Safer Food Better Business

https://www.food.gov.uk/business-guidance/safer-food-better-business-sfbb

Food Standards Agency – MyHACCP: Pest-Control Requirements

https://myhaccp.food.gov.uk/help/guidance/general-requirements-be-considered-each-prerequisite

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