

Effective treatment approach successfully tackles challenging cockroaches

When German cockroach infestations get as bad as they can, it's no good taking half measures. But a costly quick fix 'blitz' treatment isn't necessarily the answer either. What's needed instead is a focused and systematic programme of carefully targeted flushing, quality gel baiting and continual monitoring; a programme that may need to last for several weeks and one which must have the active co-operation of both management and cleaning staff.

This is the experience of UK independent pest controllers, Paul Keyworth of Reliable Pest Control and Mark Sheldon of Integrated Pest Solutions who pooled their resources last year to get on top of a major infestation in a greater Manchester restaurant with more than 300 covers that had stubbornly defeated the efforts of several previous contractors.

"I don't think I've ever seen so many cockroaches in one place," recalled Paul. "There were hundreds of them everywhere. And not just in the kitchen and behind the bar. Diners were even taking photos to post on Trip Advisor!

"Several contractors had failed to deal with the infestation from low cost operators spraying and dusting weekly to a large business who'd charged £2000 (R35,700) for a complete one-off premises blitz. They'd all failed simply because they hadn't got to the root of the problem, well-concealed within a large number of fixtures and fittings, not to mention walls and ceilings."

Having sized-up the challenge, Paul and Mark realised a far more thorough approach was required, working closely with the restaurant's manager and contract cleaners over an extended period to integrate 'out-of-hours' treatment with cleaning. Only then could they get the access needed to identify and deal with all the harbourages rather than merely depleting the foraging population.

The duo established an intensive programme of 'out-of-hours'

treatments alongside the cleaning crew from 6 am each Friday and Monday. Close working with the cleaners and bar staff allowed food and bottle fridges, freezers, pot washers, cookers, fryers, food preparation and serving units to be moved and, where necessary, partly dismantled for inspection and treatment.

"This gave us the time and space we needed as well as the access to do our job," added Mark Sheldon. "The staff and cleaners moved the equipment for us and we went to work, spraying a pyrethroid aerosol into every possible harbourage. It's amazing how often you flush cockroaches out of unlikely as well as likely areas. We found them within pot washers, plate warmers and coffee makers as well as inside the motor housings of fridges and freezers, under sinks and in wall and ceiling cavities. They were even living in the fire alarm control unit in the store room.

"After flushing, we carefully cleaned-up the spray residues and then put down Goliath® Gel in plenty of baiting points. It isn't the cheapest product on the market, but we've both found it to be very reliable and long-lasting. And if you apply it with the right amount of precision a little goes so much further than other gel baits, making it cheaper in the long run."

The final part of the treatment programme on each occasion involved the careful placement of glue board traps around the worst infested areas to monitor pest levels and locations.

While a noticeable improvement in the infestation was obvious to restaurant staff within the first two weeks, the monitor traps continued to indicate an underlying problem for a little time after. So it was only after eight weeks that Paul and Mark were confident enough to reduce their visits to weekly, then every other week.

Although they then eased back to monthly inspections, a growing number of cockroaches on the monitors have more recently necessitated a return to two weekly treatment, albeit on nowhere near

the scale or intensity of the original programme.

"The restaurant is in a block with apartments above it and at least two other food premises close by," Paul explained. "Suspended ceilings and wall voids criss-crossed with service ducts makes re-infestation from areas beyond our reach inevitable. So we need to keep our guard up and take early action to prevent any infestation building again.

"Cockroaches may no longer be evident to the casual observer during working hours, but the traps provide the evidence we need to persuade the management of the importance of timely extra investment to avoid the reputation-threatening position of not so long ago.

"It's all about understanding the pest you're dealing with and employing the most effective programme. Gel baiting has done an excellent job and we haven't needed to use more than five tubes of Goliath® Gel with the whole job to date. In fact we've spent more on monitor boards than on bait. As well as using the fastest and most reliable bait, the key is to allow enough time and put in sufficient effort to do the job that's required. For which we have to be better than just good technicians

"By doing this we've rebuilt the trust in professional pest control the restaurant owners had all but lost when we started and shown them that a quick fix is not what it takes and that they should never again wait so long before getting the right help. Believe me, there are many other businesses that really need to learn these lessons too."

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