

# THE IMPORTANCE OF HYGIENE AND HOUSEKEEPING RELATED TO PEST CONTROL

-Johan Reynecke

*On a day-to-day basis, we as Pest Control Operators come across good as well as bad hygiene and housekeeping in structures such as domestic houses and businesses.*



Pest related problems is directly related to the hygiene and housekeeping conditions maintained in a structure. Prevention is better than cure. With a little knowledge and good housekeeping, you can keep your home and business pest free.

Over the many years of doing pest control services we have found several causes for the way pests enters establishments and domestic houses. Some of the following facts might sound familiar to you but maybe we are not all aware of how we allow pests like, cockroaches, ants, fleas, etc. into our homes. Fleas and cockroaches sometime hitch a ride in woman's handbags, luggage or in laptop bags from work to home and vice versa.

Pests can be brought into the house with grocery or vegetable boxes or bags. If you are going to store these boxes or bags after unpacking, ensure they are pest free and have not been contaminated with any juices from the store bought items, they will attract flies, cockroaches and ants, and soon you could have an active infestation on your hands.

Also check the sides of the boxes which are stapled together, cockroaches like to drop egg sacks in there as well as other unthinkable places.

Insects normally infest an area if food, water and harbourage is present. Typical harbourage areas in a home is normally in the kitchen, behind the fridge / freezer, stove, cabinets or any other non-movable appliances. These are areas that normally does not get cleaned often and dust and food particulars gather underneath or around them.

Wash the flooring under your non movable appliances on a deep clean cycle to maintain hygiene in those areas. Proper deep cleaning is as important as your daily cleaning routines. Deep cleaning should occur at least once a month in a normal household or business.

Any type of skirting board in a home that is not 100% sealed could pose a threat as this is a favourable area for harbourage of cockroaches, fleas, booklice, carpet beetles, fly larva, spiders etc.

Always try not to store any items for long periods of time on the floor or in cupboards, as regular cleaning processes cannot take place and pest harbourage will occur sooner or later, possible inside the stored items as well.

We always found that lovely old tea set from grandma still in the original box in the cupboard to be one of the harbourage places in a kitchen, as it hasn't been taken out and cleaned in years.

Vacuuming is important because it will remove any insect eggs deposits on carpets and couches, and gets to the dog's hair gathering between the carpet and the skirting, fleas just love those areas to breed.

Another area which is totally overlook in any household is the bed frames of children beds, especially the ones with the wooden slats. They gather dirt between the slats and the frame and is the perfect breeding place for bedbugs. Clean them by vacuuming and washing any remaining dirt out with a detergent.

Food safety is very important and is sometimes not followed at home or in the working place, maybe due to a lack of food safety knowledge and sometimes just laziness. Most people do have a common sense about food safety and follow the rules promptly. Here is a couple of items to consider when handling food.

Food safety begins with personal hygiene, the safe handling of food during preparation and clean utensils, equipment, appliances, storage facilities, kitchen and dining room. Every time we do not clean all areas properly or do not clean up that potato skin or sugar that dropped on the floor, we invite pests into our lives. That open packet of chips or sweets in your office drawer might be heaven to uninvited pest. Oh yes, and do not forget the refuse bin inside the kitchen and outside your home or business. A full or unwashed refuse bin is one of the favourite feeding places for pests to feast in.

Disinfects all food handling areas with a proper disinfectant before and after preparing food. Always wash your hands properly before and after handling food. Always wash the food your handling before preparing them, even poultry and meats should be rinsed with cold water.

Cockroaches and other insects leave undesirable microorganisms and filth behind where they move, you do not need those organisms on your food as they could pose a health threat. You should get professional help as soon as you see insects running around in food preparation areas, don't wait because there is only a few, that is only the tip of the iceberg. Dead insects should be removed as soon as possible to avoid other insects being attracted to them as some insects are cannibalistic and will feed on the dead insects. Once an infestation is eliminated by a Pest Control Operator it is not his or her responsibility to ensure your home or business is hygienically clean. Just something to think about....

Pests on the menu. Do we know how clean the kitchen is in our favourite restaurant? Probably not, but a few of us know that the lack of proper cleanliness, hygiene and good housekeeping is mostly the cause of a cockroach in the food. The same concerns are important at home.

It is important for us to realise that hygiene and good housekeeping relates directly to the prevention of pest infestations and can therefore play an important role in having a safe and healthy lifestyle.

