

# Take Pests Out of the Picture

Your residents and their families expect your facility to feel just like home. Pests are never a part of what anyone pictures in their golden years. Unfortunately, as the warm weather sets in, pests emerge—and then try to find their own long-term living accommodations in your home.

In addition to being a nuisance, pests can carry disease-causing organisms that can threaten the health of your residents and staff. A severe pest infestation could even shut down your home. For this reason, it is important to put some extra effort into your pest management program during the spring and summer months.

To help keep pests out of the picture, long term care homes are encouraged to implement an integrated pest management (IPM) program. IPM is a proactive approach that focuses on sanitation and home maintenance to eliminate pests' access to their basic survival needs—food, water and shelter. IPM takes an environmentally responsible approach to the problem, reducing the need for chemical treatments by keeping pests out of the home in the first place.

## Assessing the situation

To determine the best plan for your home, work with a licensed pest management provider trained in pest biology and behaviour to assess the situation. During this phase, the provider will conduct a thorough inspection of your home from top to bottom and identify any conditions that may attract pests. This helps to answer questions such as: 'Where might pests live in my facility?' and 'How do they get in?' Pay special attention to pest hot spots—areas that offer pests access to their survival needs. These include the following:

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- **Kitchens and dining areas.** Remember that cockroaches, ants and rats enjoy the same foods people eat, and more. Grease run-off and food debris make food-service areas an open lunchroom for pests.
- **Employee break areas and lockers.** Employees may unknowingly carry 'hitchhiking' pests such as cockroaches into the building on their coats, shoes or personal



items. If pests such as fruit flies find open snacks in lockers, they can live comfortably and relatively undetected in their dark hiding spot.

- **Laundry facilities.** Warmth, moisture and food residue on linens entice rodents and cockroaches into laundry facilities—and they often hide behind dryers and in linen storage areas.
- **Dumpsters and waste areas.** Dumpsters attract pests looking for an easy meal. From there, pests may try to enter your facility through doors leading to waste disposal areas.

## Implement a customized plan

After your assessment, your pest management provider will recommend a customized plan to keep pests out of your home. Implement recommendations to repair any flaws or correct vulnerabilities, including pest entry points (e.g., openings in the exterior, doors that do not seal) and areas that provide pests with easy access to food and water. During this step, sanitation and facility

maintenance are key and can help discourage pests from infesting your home. In each pest hot spot, consider these preventive tips:

- **Cafeterias and kitchens.** Clean all surfaces regularly and use an organic cleaner in drains to reduce fly breeding areas. Store food in tightly sealed containers and rotate all products on a first-in, first-out (FIFO) schedule.
- **Employee break areas and locker rooms.** Ask employees to dispose of any food not stored away. Keep trash cans tightly sealed and immediately clean up any spills in the break area.
- **Laundry facilities.** Thoroughly clean under and behind washers and dryers. Fix leaks immediately to prevent any bacterial growth or unnecessary moisture that will attract pests.
- **Dumpsters and waste areas.** Place dumpsters as far from the building as possible and ask your waste management company to clean and rotate dumpsters frequently.

## Monitor and document

Successful IPM programs depend on continuous monitoring and consistent documentation. Monitor for any changes in your home—such as additions to the building or changes in the waste pick-up schedule. Ask your staff to record pest sightings, detailing the type of pest and location. This will help your pest management provider to identify trends in pest activity. Your pest management professional should also document any actions taken during a service visit. Thorough documentation will show health inspectors and regulatory agencies that you have implemented a proactive IPM program.

Overall, IPM requires open communication and partnership. Meet with your pest management professional regularly to discuss potential improvements to your program. A reputable provider also can provide training and educate your staff on their role in the IPM process. Together, you will help to ensure your facility provides a picture-perfect home for residents—and not pests. **LTC**