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Remember to log anything else you've learned in your CPD diary for even more points. **bPCA.org.uk/add**



Basis Prompt point allocation

Reading PPC mag = 2 points
Online CPD quiz = 1 point each
bPCA.org.uk/find-cpd

May the odds be ever in your favour

We've just got back from the Trade Association Forum's Best Practice Exchange, where we gave a talk about PPC and how a membership magazine can bring membership communities together.

I like these events. Everyone represents different industries, so we can share ideas without worrying about competing. And we're mostly wrestling with the same things. Getting government to listen and making the case for our members.

One panellist's comment has kept niggling at me, though.

Giles Wilkes, a senior fellow at the Institute for Government and former adviser to Theresa May and Vince Cable, reckoned that even at the height of his influence, only around 15% of what he brought to government got acted on.

He was already in the room, a few desks away from power... and still, 15%! What chance does a trade association representing a small sector like pest management have?

We've got a lot that needs hearing. Professional tools for professional people, perhaps even licensing one day. Chemical regulation that allows innovation without pricing the UK out of new products. Recognition for the essential work you do.

Rather than getting too gloomy, let's think about the changes we can make. PestAware Summit 2027 is bringing us closer to organisations whose work overlaps with yours. These are people who need pest management to work and whose voices can help make it a priority.

We've been putting the sector's case forward on the UK-EU Sanitary and Phytosanitary agreement and the implementation of Awaab's Law. We're giving evidence on working dogs to the Stormont, Northern Ireland's Parliament. Our No Small Matter report and Future of Pest Management survey provide evidence for decision-makers.

We've brought four MPs together with members in their constituencies. We're monitoring threats from campaigning groups and taking practical steps in response. We're organising a parliamentary roundtable on Awaab's Law and working with the Chemical Business Association on joint letters and articles on chemical regulation.

And that's just what I can fit on this page.

Will we get everything we ask for? No. Government time is limited, and we're a small sector with plenty of competition for attention.

But we do have a seat at the table. We have evidence, members willing to speak up, and partners who care about the same things.

So, I'm taking that 15% as a challenge. Do 1,500% more lobbying? I should probably check with Rosina before promising that.

We'll keep making the case. You need the tools, recognition and support to keep homes and businesses safe from pests. Our job is to make sure the people making decisions understand that.



Scott + Kat

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BPCA TAKES PEST MANAGEMENT PRIORITIES TO PARLIAMENT AT CHEMICALS RECEPTION

BPCA Chief Executive Rosina Robson joined representatives from across the UK chemicals sector at a parliamentary reception in September, using the opportunity to discuss regulation, UK-EU relations and the importance of maintaining access to effective professional pest management products.

The Chemical Business Association (CBA) reception took place at the Palace of Westminster on Tuesday, 8 September 2026, hosted by Julia Buckley MP for Shrewsbury.

The event brought together politicians, industry representatives and trade associations to mark more than 100 years of the CBA representing the chemical supply chain and to discuss some of the regulatory and economic challenges facing the sector.

Keeping regulation on the agenda

UK REACH was one of the important themes of the evening. The CBA and BPCA as part of the Alliance for Chemical Associations (ACA) has been pushing for a more workable system that avoids unnecessary duplication and cost while maintaining high regulatory standards.

Earlier this year, it welcomed progress on the Alternative Transitional Registration model while warning that significant challenges remained.

BPCA also discussed the developing relationship between the UK and EU, including the proposed Sanitary and Phytosanitary agreement with MPs.

Rosina Robson, BPCA Chief Executive, said: "Pest management has a real stake in the decisions being made about chemical regulation. Our members need a regulatory system that protects people and the environment while making sure professionals can continue to access the tools they need to protect public health."

"Events like this give us an opportunity to make that case directly, build relationships with the people influencing policy and make sure professional pest management isn't an afterthought when wider chemicals policy is developed."

A stronger voice for chemicals

The reception also heard from Blair McDougall MP, the Government's Minister for Reindustrialisation, who spoke about supporting skilled jobs, industrial competitiveness and investment.

Blair was appointed to the role in July and has responsibility for implementing the Government's industrial strategy.

CBA Chief Executive Tim Doggett used the event to reinforce the association's call for chemicals to receive greater recognition within government, including a dedicated minister capable of joining up industrial, economic and environmental policy.

There were also useful discussions with former Environment Secretary George Eustice and other parliamentarians about the future direction of chemical regulation.

For BPCA, attendance is part of our wider work to ensure the voice of professional pest management is heard wherever decisions affecting our members are discussed.



MAXFORCE PLATIN WITHDRAWAL DATES ANNOUNCED

Envu has announced that Maxforce Platin will be withdrawn from the UK and Irish markets, with sales ending in March 2027 and a final use date of September 2027.

The cockroach control product contains clothianidin. Envu says the active ingredient is affected by regulatory review and reassessment, leading to the product's withdrawal in line with regulatory requirements.

Pest professionals using Maxforce Platin should note two deadlines announced by Envu:

30 March 2027	Final sale date. The product can no longer be purchased after this date
30 September 2027	Final use date. The product can no longer be used after this date.

Envu is encouraging customers to review their stock levels and plan ahead so they use the product before the final use-by date.

In its announcement, the company acknowledged the impact the withdrawal could have on professionals managing cockroach infestations.

Further product updates are available through the Envu newsletter.



BPCA WARNING AFTER SUSPICIOUS EMAILS TARGET PEST COMPANIES

BPCA is urging members to stay alert following reports of suspicious emails targeting pest management companies.

Trademark issues

A member recently received an email purporting to be from Knighton Legal Services Ltd, claiming that their business name was at risk of being trademarked by another company. The email used the subject line: "Legal Notice on Business Name and Domain Conflict".

The message claimed that another party was preparing to register the recipient's business name as a trademark and demanded a response within 48 hours.

The email also offered to file a trademark application on the business's behalf if they acted immediately.

After some digging by our Marketing and Technology Manager, Scott Johnstone, this looks dubious. He said, "Pressure tactics like this are common, designed to create a sense of urgency and encourage businesses to pay for unnecessary services."

"If you're ever concerned about your business name or trademark rights, check directly with the UK Intellectual Property Office. Never rely solely on unsolicited legal threats sent by email."

Another company raising concerns

Members have also reported receiving emails from a company called Nuigo, claiming that "business profiles have already been created and are live on its platform".

The platform in question appears to be offering lead generation services, similar to our own Find a pest controller tool or Checkatrade.

The emails encourage businesses to complete their profiles in order to receive service requests through the site.

After reviewing the email and the website, BPCA has concerns about its transparency, plus the lack of physical address, no company registration details, no social media presence and no customer reviews.

It also appears that pest control companies may have been added to the platform without their knowledge or consent, with profiles seemingly created using information gathered from publicly available websites.

Stay vigilant

If you receive unsolicited emails claiming there is an urgent issue with your business name, website or online profile:

- Don't click links or provide payment details
- Verify claims using official sources
- Be cautious of high-pressure deadlines
- Contact BPCA if you're unsure whether something is genuine.

Scammers regularly target small businesses by creating urgency and confusion. Taking a few minutes to check the facts can help protect your business and your money.

BPCA

PestAware Summit 2027

SUPPORTED BY

Chartered Institute of
Environmental HealthThe Society of
Food Hygiene
and Technology

CIEH AND SOFHT BACK PESTAWARE SUMMIT 2027

British Pest Control Association (BPCA) has announced support from the Chartered Institute of Environmental Health (CIEH) and the Society of Food Hygiene and Technology (SOFHT) for PestAware Summit 2027.

CIEH will sponsor the Public Health and Communities stream, while SOFHT joins as the first strategic partner for the Food Security and Resilience stream.

CIEH's involvement builds on a long-standing relationship with BPCA and a shared commitment to protecting public health. The stream will bring environmental health practitioners and pest professionals together to share experiences and discuss practical approaches to managing pest risks in homes and communities.

SOFHT's partnership will connect pest professionals with the people responsible for food safety, creating opportunities to share knowledge and discuss pest

prevention across the food supply chain. SOFHT members will also receive discounted tickets as part of the partnership.

Rosina Robson, BPCA Chief Executive, said: "We're delighted to have CIEH and SOFHT involved in PestAware Summit.

"Environmental health practitioners and pest professionals often tackle the same problems from different perspectives. Working with our friends at CIEH will help us understand those challenges and how we can support each other to protect communities.

"Likewise, our partnership with SOFHT will bring pest management into the wider food safety conversation, connecting the people preventing pest problems with those responsible for protecting food businesses.

"That's what PestAware Summit is about. We want people who share responsibility for managing pest risks to talk, learn from each other and build relationships that help them in their everyday work."

bpca.org.uk/summit



NATIONAL PEST AWARDS 2026 WINNERS ANNOUNCED

Once again, BPCA members were heavily represented amongst the winners at the National Pest Awards, taking the gongs in all but one category. Organised by Pest magazine, the National Pest Awards are aimed at recognising and rewarding the best in the industry.

Pest magazine editor, Simon King, said:

"The breadth of skill, knowledge and passion on display in this year's entries was fantastic. We were delighted to host the industry in London and had a great night celebrating the winners and all those who were shortlisted. We look forward to doing it all again in 2027!"

The winners

Companies marked with an asterisk (*) are BPCA members

Diversity and Inclusion Award

Pest Solutions*

Unsung Hero of the Year

Charley Swann, Eradikil Pest Control*

Young Pest Controller of the Year

Beth Pemberton-Hill, Cleankill Pest Control*

Pest Controller of the Year

Iain MacKinnon, Pest Solutions*

Local Authority of the Year

Liverpool City Council

Sustainability Initiative of the Year

Lancashire Bird Control*

Sole Trader of the Year

Matthew Arnold, Squeak-a-boo Pest Management*

Small Company of the Year

Dealey Environmental*

Large Company of the Year

Rentakil Pest Control*

Lifetime Achievement Award

Malcolm Wray, Rentakil Pest Control*

Pest Business of the Year

Rentakil Pest Control*

Congratulations to all the winners and well done to the runners-up.

I SPY, A NEW SPECIES!

Following news of potential European mantis breeding on the UK mainland, we asked insect expert John Lloyd, Technical Consultant and Company Entomologist at IPMIC, to explain the ecological significance.

During August 2026, the Cornwall Wildlife Trust reported that 10 European mantis nymphs were found outside an open window at Truro School in Cornwall.

This is exciting news because these harmless predatory insects do not breed on the UK mainland. If the nymphs have emerged from a viable ootheca (egg case), then it could be the first record of a breeding European mantis (*Mantis religiosa*) population on the mainland.

The occurrence of the mantis nymphs in Cornwall is also significant because this might indicate the further northward expansion of the European Mantis from France, and demonstrates how insect species from Southern Europe can spread northwards to become established on the UK mainland due to rising temperatures and a warmer climate. This could apply to other non-native insect species too.

In the UK, praying mantises can occur either by accidental transport (on or in commodities or imported plants) or by natural dispersion from Europe.

However, rising temperatures in the UK may now support adult survival and breeding.

Milder UK winter temperatures may result in increased egg viability, allowing the European praying mantis to survive and to become established on the UK mainland in the near future.

The European mantis (*Mantis religiosa*) is approximately 6-7cm in size, usually green or brown in colour and is native to southern Europe.

They are predatory and adopt a characteristic 'praying' stance when stalking prey. This posture makes them easy to identify as a field characteristic and is why they are often called the 'praying mantis'.

Praying mantises are efficient hunters and feed on a wide variety of insect species, including moths, flies, crickets and grasshoppers.

Over recent years, the distribution of the European mantis has been changing. In the early 2000s, although native to central and southern

Europe, their northern limit extended to Jersey.

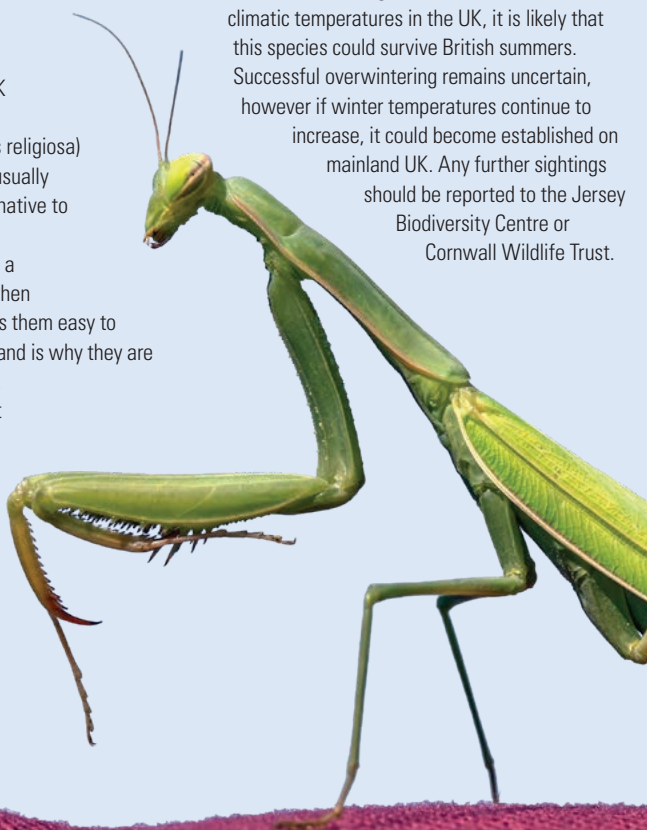
Since then, repeated sightings have been reported on the Isle of Wight. From the 2020s, aided by warmer climatic conditions, range expansion from France increased into the Channel Islands. During 2023-2025 the Jersey Biodiversity Centre reported an increase in Mantis activity, with several sightings each year. Most sightings occurred along the south coast between St Helier and Le Hocq.

With the first sightings of European mantis reported in Cornwall in 2025, it may not be surprising that the first potential breeding event on the UK mainland has now been recorded in Cornwall.

The Cornwall Wildlife Trust states that Mantis breeding populations have already been recorded on the Isle of Wight and Channel Islands, but have not previously been recorded breeding on the UK mainland.

The female European mantis can produce 3-6 egg cases (oothecae) per season and each case can contain 50 to 300 eggs. The eggs overwinter, protected inside the ootheca, and as egg viability is typically 50% to 75%, there is potentially significant chance of mantis colonies becoming established.

Although no direct evidence has yet been found of European mantis breeding or overwintering on mainland UK, given the northwards range expansion from southern Europe to the Channel Isle and the Isle of Wight, combined with warmer climatic temperatures in the UK, it is likely that this species could survive British summers. Successful overwintering remains uncertain, however if winter temperatures continue to increase, it could become established on mainland UK. Any further sightings should be reported to the Jersey Biodiversity Centre or Cornwall Wildlife Trust.



AWAAB'S LAW COMES TO SCOTLAND

Scotland's version of Awaab's Law, the Investigation and Commencement of Repair (Scotland) Regulations 2026, came into force on 6 October 2026.

On Friday, 4 September, the Scottish Government's Local Government and Housing Directorate published guidance for landlords and tenants on the new regulations.

The regulations will apply to both private and social homes, and cover mould and damp only.

The effect of the regulations is similar to measures being introduced in England, giving landlords clear duties and timeframes for investigating and resolving issues in properties.

These duties and timeframes come into play as soon as the landlord becomes aware of an issue in their property. They may become aware through a tenant reporting it directly or through contractors, such as pest technicians.

While the regulations themselves do not place a duty on pest technicians or other contractors to report mould and damp they encounter, doing so can help landlords better understand the condition of their properties and give pest professionals an opportunity to help tenants with more than just pests.

Awaab's Law elsewhere

Awaab's Law in England will enter its second phase on 30 November 2026, expanding its scope to cover significant hygiene hazards, including pests.

When first introduced in England in October 2025, it applied to the most serious emergency cases, which needed to be investigated and made safe within 24 hours.

Unlike in Scotland, Awaab's Law in England currently applies only to social housing.

Wales also introduced its own equivalent to Awaab's Law in April this year, through an update to the existing Welsh Housing Quality Standard (WHQS), which applies to social housing only.

This update to the WHQS introduced timeframes for action similar to those in England, except for emergency hazards, where social landlords have 24 hours to investigate and a further 24 hours to remedy the problem.

The timeframes under the updated WHQS apply to all Housing Health and Safety Rating System (HHSRS) hazards, including pests.

BPCA SHOWCASES PEST MANAGEMENT CAREERS TO DWP AND YOUTH SUPPORT ORGANISATIONS

BPCA helped Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) staff and organisations supporting young people to better understand the career opportunities available in professional pest management.

More than 200 people attended Meet the Industry: Careers in Pest Management in September.

The special webinar was designed for Jobcentre staff and organisations working with young people, introducing attendees to the pest management sector, the range of roles available and the skills, attributes and training routes that can lead to a long-term career in the industry.

BPCA's John Horsley led part of the session, explaining what employers look for in a pest professional and introducing the qualifications and development opportunities available to people entering the sector.

He also shared some of BPCA's wider work to promote pest management as a career, including our careers video and the pestcareers.org.uk website

Attendees heard directly from BPCA members too, giving careers advisers and support organisations a practical view of the sector.

This included the experience of a young person who has been through BPCA's onboarding programme, alongside the perspective of a pest management business owner who explained what employers need from new recruits and the opportunities available to people joining the profession.



SYNGENTA APPOINTS NEW UK TECHNICAL MANAGER

Syngenta has appointed Jake Braithwaite to the role of Technical Manager for professional pest management (PPM) in the UK and Ireland, to support the company's range of products and innovative digital technologies for pest control in commercial, residential and rural farm situations.

This position reinforces the company's focus on industry innovation.

Jake brings a wealth of experience in product development and application as a field biologist within the Syngenta trials team.

Commenting on his appointment, Jake said: "The role of Technical Manager combines the technical expertise developed as a field biologist, with my passion for supporting customers and commercial teams.

"I'm excited by the opportunity to provide technical leadership for the pest management industry that delivers practical guidance and champions responsible product stewardship. That will build a strong, resilient set of science-based solutions that address evolving customer needs and regulatory requirements."

Syngenta Business Manager for PPM, Richard Moseley, added: "We are pleased to be able to further expand the Syngenta team supporting pest management in the UK. Jake's appointment signifies our ongoing investment and commitment to the future of professional pest management."

SCOTT GAMMON APPOINTED AS ORKIN UK MANAGING DIRECTOR

Scott Gammon has been appointed as the new managing director of Orkin UK.

Scott took the helm of the pest control, bird control and Legionella services specialist on 1 August, succeeding current MD, Kristian Dales.

His most recent roles were as general manager and company director at Pelsis Group, the manufacturer and distributor of pest control and garden care products, where he led operations across the UK, Europe, the Middle East and the Far East. He also has extensive experience of the pest control industry, having worked for Rentokil Initial for 17 years in numerous roles culminating in area operations manager.

"I'm excited to be joining such an ambitious and dynamic company," said Scott. "In the last three years Orkin UK has demonstrated impressive growth and service expansion to become one of the UK's leading pest and legionella services companies and together with my incredible colleagues, I look forward to leading the group on the next stage of our journey."

Matt Turek, division president, Orkin International, said: "Scott comes to us with a strong background in leading large, multi-site operations and driving growth across international markets. What stands out most about Scott is his hands-on, collaborative leadership style and his focus on building strong teams while improving how the business runs day-to-day."



OCS ANNOUNCES PROPOSED ACQUISITION OF MITIE

BPCA member OCS has announced plans to acquire Mitie in a deal that would bring together two major facilities management businesses.

Mitie shareholders approved the proposed acquisition on 16 September 2026. Completion remains subject to the remaining conditions, including regulatory approvals.

If completed, the deal would create a larger UK-headquartered international facilities management group, combining the companies' sector knowledge, specialist services and geographic reach.

Rob Legge, Group Chief Executive Officer of OCS, described the announcement as an important milestone for both companies.

He said: "Subject to completion, we would build a British facilities management group that is better positioned to support the organisations that keep the country running.

"While there is a long process ahead, both businesses remain focused on supporting customers and delivering the high standards they expect every day."

Mitie Chief Executive Officer Phil Bentley said the recommended offer reflected the strength of Mitie's brand, services and reputation.

He added: "As part of a larger group with a wider geographical footprint, Mitie would have an even stronger platform to invest in our people, technology and services, and to do even more for the customers and communities we support.

"There is a process still to run and much to work through. Until completion, it is business as usual."

Further information about the proposed acquisition and its conditions is available in the Rule 2.7 announcement published through the London Stock Exchange.



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DIGITAL WASTE TRACKING (DWT) IS HERE

A system for digital waste tracking is being rolled out across the UK to tackle waste crime and make reporting easier.

The new tracking service will record much of the same information that is already required for waste transfer notes and hazardous waste consignment notes.

Phase 1

From 1 October 2026, waste receiving sites in England and Wales must record and report the waste they receive using Digital Waste Tracking (DWT).

Waste receiving sites in Scotland and Northern Ireland will also need to do so from January 2027.

A waste receiving site is a site that holds an environmental permit or waste management licence to receive waste from third parties.

Phase 2

From October 2027, Digital Waste Tracking will also become mandatory for:

- Waste carriers
- Waste brokers
- Waste dealers
- Waste exporters.

A private beta phase for these waste collectors has also begun, and in spring 2027 all waste collectors can

voluntarily join a public beta. Certain waste exemptions will be included in this phase, but they have not yet been announced.



Paperless?

While intended to replace waste transfer notes and consignment notes, the current paper-based tracking methods will not disappear immediately.

Waste transfer notes and hazardous waste consignment notes must continue to be completed.

You will also still need to submit hazardous waste consignee returns. If you hold an environmental permit, you must continue to submit waste returns in line with its conditions.

Submitting data

To submit data, you will be required to create a Defra account using your organisation's Government Gateway, gov.uk, or One Login Account. There are two ways to submit digital tracking data.

First, there will be a spreadsheet which can be completed and uploaded. This is intended as a temporary solution and is expected to remain available until at least October 2027.

The spreadsheet is available and can be submitted on gov.uk.

Data can also be submitted via specialist software. You first need to register with Defra to receive a unique code, which will allow your chosen software to connect to Defra.

To conduct digital waste tracking, the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs has produced a list of software providers and products that meet their requirements.

Once digital tracking becomes mandatory, an annual registration fee of £26 will be charged upfront.

Where can I find more information?

If you need further information, there is a dedicated digital waste tracking helpline which is open Monday to Friday, 8am to 6pm: **03000 203 781**

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INSIGHTS INTO WORKING DOGS IN PEST MANAGEMENT

In July, BPCA launched a survey looking at your experience of using working dogs in pest management.

The survey and its results not only help us understand you and your work, but are also valuable as we lobby to protect the pest management toolkit.

We have already used your feedback to help inform our response to proposed legislation in Northern Ireland, the only part of the UK where hunting with dogs is currently unrestricted.

The proposed legislation would seek to bring Northern Ireland more closely in line with the rest of the UK and is largely modelled on Scotland's law.

What we learned

As the law around the use of working dogs has changed in recent years, and may change further in Northern Ireland, England and Wales, the survey looked closely at how existing laws meet the realities of pest management work.

Different questions were asked depending on where respondents operate, allowing us to better understand how the different laws affect pest professionals across the UK.

Where respondents operate

Of those using working dogs in pest management:

Country	Respondents
England	81%
Scotland	14%
Northern Ireland	3%
Wales	2%

How are dogs being used?

Dogs were mostly being used to support the control of mammals.

Some 88% of respondents who used working dogs did so when controlling mammals, compared with 15% who used dogs in work involving invertebrates.

Use of working dogs	Respondents
Mammal control and detection	88%
Invertebrate detection	15%

The only invertebrate respondents reported training dogs to detect was the bed bug.

Half of the respondents using dogs for bed bug detection had trained the dog themselves.

That proportion was much higher for dogs trained to detect mammals, with 82% of respondents saying they had trained their own dogs.

Which mammals are dogs trained to detect?

Rats were comfortably the most common mammal that respondents trained dogs to detect.

Mammal	Respondents training dogs
Rats	92%
Mice	54%
Other mammals including rabbits	30%

The way dogs are used for rabbits was particularly interesting.

Respondents described using dogs as part of the survey process much like they do for rodents, keeping them above ground and using their sense of smell to establish whether a burrow was being used as harbourage.

This could save time during surveys and allow pest professionals to implement appropriate controls more efficiently.

It's a useful example of why understanding how working dogs are actually used matters when legislation is being considered. Dogs may form part of surveying and detection work as well as direct control activities.

Why your evidence matters

We're grateful to everyone who gave their time to complete the survey.

The knowledge and experiences you share with us provide evidence that helps BPCA explain to policymakers how pest management works in practice.

This is particularly important when legislation could affect tools or techniques used by professional pest controllers. Good evidence helps us show where working dogs fit into pest management, what they are being used for and what the consequences of changes to legislation might be.

Working dogs are part of the wider pest management toolkit, and we want to make sure decisions about their future use are informed by the experiences of the professionals who rely on them.

If you have any more thoughts you would like to share with us about the use of working dogs in pest management, email policy@bpca.org.uk.

BIRDS OF A FEATHER, STITCH TOGETHER

Defender Bird Spikes took a detour into the fashion industry earlier this year, collaborating with Zoë Anastasia, a fashion designer who incorporated 40 metres of bird deterrent spikes into her final Graduate Fashion Week collection, titled *Forgive Me Father*.

While studying fashion design at Bath Spa University, Zoë reached out to the bird control manufacturer with an unusual material request. She wanted to painstakingly link the metal-based Defender Bird Spikes together to create an intricate, defensive wearable shell layered over a custom leather dress. Zoë said:

"FORGIVE ME FATHER is an apology that does not belong to us.

"My fashion collection explores protection, restriction and physical burden through hostile textile development.

"Research into magpies stealing anti-bird spikes to protect their nests sparked my interest in how hostile objects could be reclaimed as forms of defence.

"Translated into fashion through natural and man-made forms of protection, the collection reflects the expectation that women must continuously adapt their behaviour to stay safe.

"This led me to reimagine exaggerated hip silhouettes, referencing restrictive Victorian garments from the 1870s "hysteria panic". The anti-bird spikes used throughout the project were sourced through a sponsorship from Defender Bird Spikes, who generously supplied their discontinued steel-base spikes.

"Combining chainmail construction, reconstructed

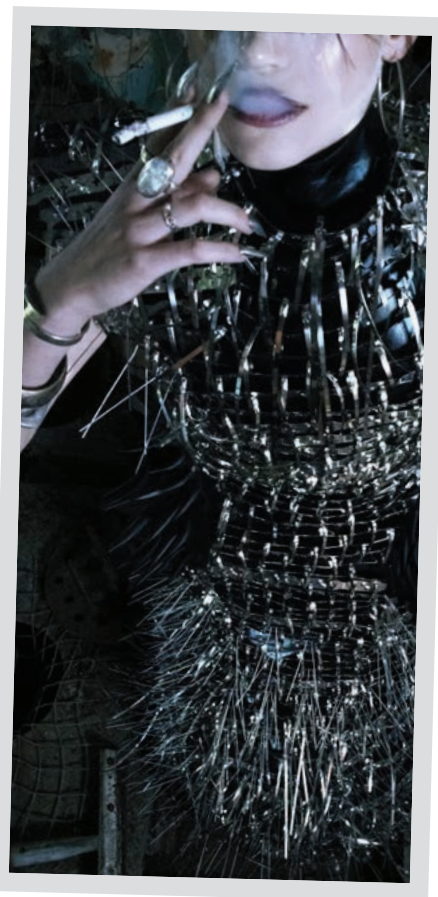
motorbike garments, latex, laser-cut leather, embroidery and 3D-printed elements, I transformed a material intended for deterrence into an exoskeleton structure."

BPCA asked Defender for comment and Kursty Jones, Director, said: "Zoë's incredibly talented and her work speaks for itself.

"Holly and I both have art degrees and we don't often get the chance to express ourselves with Defender Bird Spikes, so when Zoë asked if we could help we jumped at the chance to live through her, vicariously!

"Also as parents ourselves, we feel strongly about supporting the next generation in their endeavours. It's just wonderful to watch someone work hard and succeed. We had some old stock in the warehouse which we weren't using so it made sense to give it to someone who appreciates it and clearly repurpose it."

"My fashion collection explores protection, restriction and physical burden through hostile textile development."



Still handwriting pest control reports?

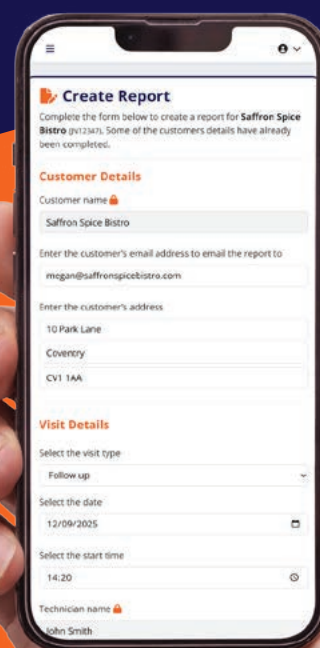
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NATURAL ENGLAND UPDATES WILDLIFE LICENSING FORMS

Natural England has announced changes to its wildlife licensing application and reporting forms, with new digital services.

Licence holders using A08 and A09 licences to kill, take or disturb wild birds will need to use a new online return and renewal form on gov.uk. The online service will replace the downloadable forms currently available.

The main change is that licence returns and renewals must now be completed at the same time. Anyone wishing to renew their licence will need to request renewal when submitting their report of action. If a renewal is not requested at that stage, a new licence application will be required.

Natural England says the combined form is designed to simplify the process. It brings reporting and renewal into a single service and includes step-by-step guidance, helping applicants provide the information and evidence required, including records of non-lethal action.

The gov.uk pages for these licences will also be updated, replacing downloadable forms with online start buttons and improved guidance.

Natural England has also reminded licence users that the new A35 dormouse digital application form launched on 3 August 2026.

More class licence forms moving online

Natural England is continuing its programme to digitise wildlife licensing services. Over the coming months, registration and reporting forms for most class licences will move online.

Users can expect updates to gov.uk licence pages, including improved guidance and online application routes. Existing class licence registrants will receive email notifications when new forms become available. Natural England is encouraging users to provide feedback on the new digital services through the online forms. Support remains available through the organisation's enquiries team.

The changes form part of Natural England's wider effort to make wildlife licensing applications and reporting quicker and easier to complete.

MEET THE ASSESSOR

New BPCA assessor Matthew Benton has experience on both sides of the membership assessment. A former BPCA member, pest management business owner, trainer, and business adviser, he talks to PPC magazine about how he got into pest control, what he hopes to bring to assessments, and why getting the foundations right matters.

PPC First things first. How did you actually get into pest management?

MB Believe it or not, it came about one night when me and the wife were sat watching *Life of Grime*.

I'm from a rural background, and I remember looking at it and thinking, "There's a need for that round here." There really weren't many pest control businesses locally at the time.

So I started looking into it, did a few courses, went to some events and found out more about the industry. It went from there really, and I ended up setting up my own pest management business.

PPC What sort of work did you get involved with?

MB Predominantly commercial work. We had some domestic customers, but there was a lot of contract work covering food manufacturing, warehouses and agriculture.

We looked after some big shipping stores on the Humber Bank as well, and did things like cleaning and treating grain stores before harvest.

I've always had a particular interest in rodents too, especially their behaviour and characteristics.

PPC Pest management isn't your only business experience, is it?

MB No. Before that I worked for a local authority as a Project Manager and business adviser.

Part of my job was helping new businesses establish themselves and grow. We even worked with businesses coming over from Europe and other countries, helping them set up, recruit people and develop staff.

Then I went on to run my own training business, delivering everything from pest management training through to ATV (All-Terrain Vehicle), leadership and management training.

PPC How does all that feed into being a BPCA assessor?

MB I'm particularly interested in helping businesses develop.

I compare it to building a house. A lot of us want to start building the walls straight away. You get out there and start delivering the service.

But you've got to make sure the foundations are right as well. Otherwise, eventually, it'll come collapsing down. Hopefully I can help members look at those foundations as well as the pest management side of things.

PPC And you know what it's like to be on the receiving end of an assessment?

MB I do. My own pest management business was a BPCA member, so I've been through membership assessments myself.

Now I'm learning to carry them out, so it's gone full circle. I'm poacher turned gamekeeper, basically.

PPC Finally, what keeps you occupied when you're not talking pests and businesses?

NEW MEMBERS



Servicing members:

- Boudica Biohazard & Pest Control Ltd
- Eco-Guard Environmental Services
- Ecoguard Solutions Ltd
- Evolve Pest Control and Wildlife Management Ltd
- Fair Deal Pest Control
- Falcon Environmental Services
- GCB Falconry & Pest Solutions
- Heron Pest Solutions limited
- J&D Mcgrath Limited
- LWT Pest Solutions
- Panda Comms Ltd
- Pest Control Pros Ltd
- Pest Guardian Ltd
- Pest Smart Solutions and Consultancy
- Pest Zap Environmental Services Ltd
- Prestige Pest Control Ltd
- PRJ Solutions Ltd
- Recti-Fly Pest and Bird Control
- Ro-Go Pest Management Ltd
- Strata Environmental Group Ltd
- The StaLady Limited.

Observer members:

- Global Material Technologies
- Kelvin Catering Services & Facilities Management
- Pest-A-Tac
- Vinod Pest Control.

Manufacturing and distributor member:

- Theo's Home Care.

MB I've got a background in motorsport and mechanics and did a bit of racing years ago. I enjoy clay target shooting, and I love travelling. I've been all over the world.

Although we've just bought a bungalow, so at the moment there's plenty of renovating and garden clearing keeping me busy too.



Matthew, right, on a member assessment

NEW BPCA ONLINE COURSE HELPS TECHNICIANS TACKLE ENVIRONMENTAL RISK ASSESSMENT

BPCA has launched a new online course to give pest professionals practical guidance on completing Environmental Risk Assessments (ERAs) when considering professional-grade rodenticides.

Creating Pest Management Environmental Risk Assessments (ERAs) guides technicians step by step through the Campaign for Responsible Rodenticide Use UK (CRRU-UK) ERA process.

Environmental Risk Assessments form an important part of responsible rodenticide use, helping technicians identify potential risks to wildlife and the wider environment before deciding whether treatment is justified.

The new two-hour online course covers what information technicians need to collect, how to assess risks, and what supporting evidence to record.

It also explores the precautions technicians can put in place to reduce risks to non-target species and how to apply CRRU guidance when deciding whether to use rodenticide.

Karen Dawes, BPCA Training and Development Manager, said:

"An Environmental Risk Assessment shouldn't simply be another piece of paperwork to complete before putting rodenticide down.

"It should help you think through what's happening on the site, what the risks are and whether rodenticide is actually the right option.

"We've designed this course to make that process clearer and give technicians more confidence in recording the evidence behind the decisions they make."

Practical learning for pest technicians

The foundation-level course has no prerequisites and suits both technicians who regularly complete ERAs and those seeking a clearer understanding of the process.

Through a range of practical situations, learners will explore how to identify relevant risks, select appropriate risk-reduction measures, and make informed, defensible decisions about professional-grade rodenticide use.

The course takes around two hours to complete and is worth two BPCA Registered CPD points.

There is no formal assessment. Once the course is complete, learners can print a BPCA certificate of completion online.

Find out more and take the Creating Pest Management Environmental Risk Assessments online learning course at bpca.org.uk/find-training

"We've designed this course to make that process clearer."



BPCA SCOOPS FIVE TROPHIES AT THE 2026 MEMCOM AWARDS

On a spectacular night for BPCA, the team took home awards in all four nominated categories, plus the coveted Grand Prix Award, at the 2026 Memcom Awards.

The Memcom Membership Excellence Awards are designed to showcase the very best of the membership and trade association sector.

BPCA won in three categories:

- Best Use of Video – Pest Careers
- Best Inclusion Initiative - Pest Careers
- Best Public Awareness Campaign - Birmingham's bin strikes.

We also received the highly commended award for:

- Best Non-Celebratory Event (£100K+) – PestEx 2026.

As a result, BPCA also took home the coveted Grand Prix Award, given to the organisation that accumulates the highest overall score based on its wins and highly-commended entries across all categories during the ceremony. It serves as the ultimate "best in show" recognition for the event.

BPCA Chief Exec, Rosina Robson, attended the event, held in London on 24 September 2026. She commented:

"What a special night for BPCA! Such a huge achievement to take home a trophy for every category we were nominated in and we couldn't be more elated.

"It's a real testament to the hard work of our Staff team and of course, our volunteers, who share in this win with us."

Rosina continued, "That brings the total to seven awards this year, a banner year for the team on the awards front. Wish us luck for the Association Excellence Awards later this year.

OVER HALF OF ENGLISH COUNCILS RECOMMEND BPCA MEMBERS, RESEARCH FINDS

BPCA research has found that UK councils regularly recommend BPCA members to their residents.

BPCA has been researching local authority pest management across the UK, finding significant levels of trust in the BPCA and its members. 46% of all UK local authorities use their websites to signpost residents to the BPCA and our Find a pest controller tool.



In England, 52% of all unitary and district councils recommend the BPCA to residents, 45% of councils in Northern Ireland, 38% in Scotland, and 32% in Wales.

Councils recommending that residents seek help from BPCA members points to another issue in local authorities: many no longer provide services directly to residents.

46% of all UK local authorities provide no service at all; 40% still maintain their own pest control teams, and the remaining 14% deliver service through contractors.

Of those councils that do provide some form of service, whether through contractors or their own staff, nearly a third do so exclusively with BPCA members.

Councils are not legally required to provide pest management to their residents. While councils have a duty under the Prevention of Damage by Pests Act 1949 to keep their areas free of rodents, that duty extends only to acting on their own land and enforcing compliance by other property owners.

For pest management on their own properties, 61% of UK councils rely on contractors to some extent; only 34% use staff alone.

We also found that over a quarter of pest management on council property is carried out exclusively by BPCA members.

Rosina Robson, BPCA Chief Executive, said: "BPCA members provide essential services to their local communities and should be proud of the fact that so many councils around the country trust them to support residents at their most vulnerable."

Local councils are often the first port of call when pests are found, but with so many councils no longer providing pest management services to the public, they play an important role in signposting residents to trusted professionals. BPCA and its membership are now widely recommended to communities across the country.



PESTS IN POLITICS



Ciaran Breen, BPCA
Policy and
Campaigns Officer

Since the last issue of Pests in Politics, we've been busy welcoming a new Prime Minister, working hard to protect the toolkit and supporting BPCA members in engaging with their local MPs.

New Government in Westminster

BPCA wrote to key members of the new government, including Prime Minister Andy Burnham MP and were pleased to get a response. We also wrote to the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, the Secretary of State for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs and the new Chancellor of the Exchequer.

Our letter reinforced many of the recommendations we made earlier this year to the Labour Party's National Policy forum, with protections for people in temporary accommodation; ensuring support is available for low-income homeowners to pay for treatments; and measures to tackle the cost of insuring young people on work vehicles. We also made calls for more effective regulation and reduced reporting burdens for the chemicals sector.

Showcasing you

We've been pleased to actively support more members with visits from their local representatives. BPCA CEO, Rosina Robson, and CSS Pest Services recently hosted Derby North MP Catherine Atkinson. Housing conditions were a significant part of the conversation, especially with the upcoming expansion of Awaab's Law.

Rosina also helped to celebrate Bounty Pest Control's 30th anniversary with Ashford MP and member of the House of Commons Environmental Audit Committee, Sojan Joseph.

Awaab's Law

In July the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government released new guidance and announced that the second stage of Awaab's Law would enter into force 30 November. The second stage will extend the scope of protection to pest hazards considered to be significant.

Glue traps

Scotland's ban on the use, sale, and possession of glue traps entered into force on the 1 July. Breaking the law could result in up to five years' imprisonment, and/or a fine of up to £40,000.

BPCA are preparing a paper for Defra to make our case for a ban on general sale in England clear. In September Defra responded to recommendations made by the Animal Sentience Committee back in March to ban their sale. Defra agreed that there was value in a ban but would not bring new legislation to introduce one.

They explained that they wanted to see how effective the ban in Scotland is first and believe a ban in England would be ineffective unless Wales, and possibly Northern Ireland too, were also on board.

While the government refused to legislate on the issue, Dame Rebecca Harris MP introduced the Sale and Supply of Glue Traps (Prohibition) Bill to Parliament. As a private member's bill, it is unlikely to progress.

BPCA and the Chartered Institute of Environmental Health have jointly written to Dame Harris to highlight our own concerns about the public's continued access to glue traps, as well as issues with the licensing system.

Working dogs

Our Policy team has been working hard to make the case for working dogs in Northern Ireland. The Northern Ireland Assembly's Committee for Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs made a call for evidence on draft legislation that would affect the use of working dogs in pest management.

BPCA gave evidence in Stormont on 15 October. Our response to the committee was that BPCA did not reject the bill, but requested amendments to ensure that it did not unintentionally affect the work of members and ensure that it would be consistent with the rest of the UK.

Chemicals

BPCA responded to a European Chemicals Agency consultation for potential substitutes to alphachloralose, reinforcing the rodenticide's value to professionals in Northern Ireland who still operate under European regulations.



Alongside other members of the Alliance of Chemical Associations, we met with officials at the Health and Safety Executive for discussions to help shape the UK/EU SPS Agreement and its effects on the biocidal product regulations.

Also...

- NatureScot sought views as part of their general license review. BPCA responded and reinforced the value of general licenses for the flexibility they provide pest technicians, and recommended that wood pigeons be added to GL03 to tackle issues experienced by food production sites
- His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue services released a report into the state of the firearms licensing system in England and Wales, describing it as a "postcode lottery in the level of scrutiny, service and processing times experienced by applicants and certificate holders".



**15 CONSULTATIONS
COMPLETED 2026**

PESTS IN THE PRESS: SUMMER 2026



Kathryn Shaw, BPCA
Public Relations and
Publications Manager

Throughout late spring and summer, BPCA appeared in national and regional media, including broadsheet and tabloid newspapers, radio and online coverage.

Topics covered in press releases to national and regional news outlets included hornets and yellow-legged hornets, particularly the first sighting in the East Midlands, ants, garden pests, bed bugs, wasps and carpet beetles.

The team have also provided expert comment on a variety of species to journalists across the news spectrum, from rats on campsites for the Daily Telegraph, to cockroaches for The Mirror, spiders for Good Housekeeping, and wasps for the Daily Star.

Press releases and thought-leadership pieces for allied trades included the launch of the No Small Matter report on World Pest Day in June, which also led to a follow-up article produced by RHE Global and secured exclusive pieces written for titles including Tomorrow's Cleaning and Health Business.

BPCA is actively fostering collaborations around the No Small Matter report with relevant organisations, sharing the on-going impact of the findings and helping to encourage wider discourse around the impact of pest infestations, the contribution of the industry to the UK economy and the importance of recognising pest control as a priority for the protection of public health.

Work is also underway to promote next year's first-ever PestAware Summit, with press releases announcing the event featured on key platforms

including the British Cleaning Council, hotel magazine, Cleaning Hygiene Today, The Cleanzine, eat.drink.sleep magazine, Hotelier and Hospitality and Facilities Management Journal.

The summit has featured across pest control industry titles and regular updates can be found on BPCA's social channels, with a wide-ranging press campaign planned in the run-up to the event. As well as a busy PR period, the BPCA team have been on hand to support members over the summer too.

From preparing for a TV appearance to dealing with inquiries from the press, members have been able to access advice and support when they need it.

BPCA has also made sure to shine a spotlight on members CSS Pest Services in Derbyshire, who welcomed MP for Derby North Catherine Atkinson to their premises in August, and Bounty Pest Control in Kent, who welcomed Ashford MP Sojan Joseph in September.

BPCA Chief Executive Rosina Robson attended both events and took part in discussions with the MPs on topics including the No Small Matter report and yellow-legged hornets, while press releases were issued to local press along with a photo from each visit.

Read all about it!

Spot something in the press? Idea for a press release? Tell us.

hello@bpca.org.uk

TOP 3 HEADLINES



**DRUNKEN
BUZZTARD**

**WATCH OUT
FOR THOSE
TIPSY WASPS**

**LOWER INCOME
AREAS MOST AT RISK
FROM PEST CONTROL
PROBLEMS**



JULY TO OCTOBER 2026

ARTICLES PUBLISHED 361

**TOTAL CIRCULATION 2026
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ASK THE TECHNICAL TEAM

Do we need to do three CRRU points every year?

As part of the Campaign for Responsible Rodenticide Use (CRRU) stewardship scheme, new rules for purchasers and users of professional rodenticides came into force in 2026.

Good stewardship helps protect non-target wildlife while keeping essential rodent-control tools available for purchase. You have two options to continue using professional rodenticides:

CPD-route

Be compliant on a CRRU-UK approved CPD scheme (like BPCA Registered) – including getting your full 20 points

AND

Have at least three of your 20 points be from CRRU-UK-approved CPD materials

AND

Have a CRRU-UK-approved qualification (any date).

OR

Requalification-route

Have a CRRU-UK-approved qualification passed within the last five years.

This could be your BPCA/RSPH Level 2 Award in Pest Management or an approved Using Rodenticides qualification.

A full list of CRRU-UK-approved CPD schemes, CPD materials, and qualifications is available at thinkwildlife.org

We recommend that you do the CPD route so you're always accessing the latest stewardship updates. Anyone on BPCA Registered can earn their three CRRU-UK points through the free short online learning courses already available in your MyBPCA Area. There are now six to choose from. bpca.org.uk/me

Alternatively - join us online for our special CRRU-UK Keynote and get all your CRRU-UK CPD points in one longer live session. 2 December 2026, 9.30 am – 12.30 pm bpca.org.uk/events

When should I complete an Environmental Risk Assessment (ERA)?

You must complete or review an ERA each time you use rodenticides externally, in line with the product label.

An annual or one-off site survey can capture general environmental information. However, every rodenticide application must be supported by current information and an environmental risk assessment that references that application.

Don't be tempted to miss this process, it's the law to follow the label conditions. And do you really want to be relying on old paperwork where site conditions or risks may have changed? ERAs keep the wildlife safe and you protected.

Where should I put dead rodent carcasses if I used rodenticide?

Disposal of dead rodents was straightforward at one time, as most local authority waste sites or hospitals with incinerators accepted the carcasses.

These options are fast disappearing for various reasons, and so it's become necessary to have clearer disposal routes which preclude conflicts with current waste guidelines.

Domestic sites – small infestations (no more than around six bodies) may be managed by double bagging and disposal via the domestic system. Make sure your customer is happy to use their bins for this purpose.

Commercial sites – carcass disposal should be traceable (by yourself via a licensed incinerator contractor). Carcasses can be temporarily stored frozen to prevent decomposition. The options are:

- Local authority waste sites – becoming increasingly difficult in some areas but contact your local council to see if these can be accommodated
- Pet crematoria – the governing body for these sites confirms they can take small amounts, assessed by weight. They cannot take large quantities as planning regulations approve them primarily for the disposal of companion pets
- Commercial waste contractors – many are willing to help, but you might need to do some research.

Are you a
BPCA
member with
a technical question?
Get in touch...



technical@bpca.org.uk
01332 225 104
x.com/britpestcontrol



WHO YOU GONNA CALL?

The members of our technical team are happy to come out to visit sites with BPCA members who are struggling with a tough infestation and need hands-on advice. Get in touch!



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BUILDING THE TRAINERS WHO WILL SHAPE THE FUTURE OF PEST MANAGEMENT

The future of pest management depends upon having the right people, with the right knowledge and skills, supported by high-quality training.

That's why BPCA is expanding its network of specialist associate trainers, and we're inviting experienced pest management professionals with a passion for sharing their knowledge to express an interest in joining it.

We've worked with associate trainers for many years, bringing specialist expertise and practical experience into our training courses and qualifications. Our associate trainers work with us on a flexible, consultancy basis, delivering training when opportunities arise. They are paid an agreed day rate, with travel and subsistence expenses covered by agreement.

But this is about more than just simply meeting demand for training courses.

TEACHING A NEW FRAMEWORK

BPCA, supported by industry stakeholders, is developing a new qualification framework designed to establish clear standards across all levels of the pest management profession. Our ambition is to provide technicians with a clear and progressive career pathway, from entry-level learning through to higher-level professional recognition and academic achievement.

Pest technicians should be proud of the work they do. The role is far more complex than it can sometimes appear from the outside. Technicians need knowledge of pest biology and behaviour, legislation, risk management, treatment methods, environmental considerations, customer communication and much more.

As the complexity and expectations of the role continue to grow, qualifications need to properly recognise the level of knowledge, skills and professional responsibility that professional

technicians provide on a day-to-day basis.

Our new qualification framework will help provide that recognition. It will give people opportunities to develop and demonstrate their competence at different stages of their careers, with progression through both vocational and academic routes. Ultimately, we want a career pathway that is accessible to all, clear to all and beneficial to all.

ALL THE PUZZLE PIECES

Qualifications alone, however, do not raise standards. The quality and consistency of the training supporting those qualifications are equally important. As BPCA develops its new qualification framework, we are also looking at how we can provide greater cohesion in the way our courses and qualifications are delivered, while still drawing on the experience and expertise of skilled trainers.

Our ambition is to develop a consistent training experience, with high-quality learning materials, activities and guidance that ensure technicians receive the same core learning wherever their training is delivered.

As the framework develops, there will be opportunities for BPCA trainers to play an important role in delivering this training and helping us maintain the standards expected across the profession.

That is why we are building a broader network of experienced trainers with different technical specialisms, geographic coverage and professional experience.

We want to bring together like-minded people who can do more than deliver information – people who can make learning practical, engaging and relevant to the real challenges technicians face in the field.

Our associate trainers may deliver established

BPCA courses and qualifications, as well as specialist technical and practical training.

We are particularly interested in professionals who combine strong technical knowledge with training experience and a genuine interest in developing others.

A recognised teaching qualification is useful, but we are also interested in people with the right experience who are prepared to develop their training skills further.

This is an important part of the BPCA's wider ambition to professionalise the sector, raise standards and ensure that the people delivering training are helping technicians achieve the level of competence the industry needs.

If you have the technical expertise, experience and enthusiasm to help develop the next generation of pest management professionals, we'd like to hear from you.

To express your interest head to bpca.org.uk/trainer or contact training@bpca.org.uk today for more information.



"Ultimately, we want a career pathway that is accessible to all."

MOUSE CONTROL...

...IN A FOOD MANUFACTURING ENVIRONMENT



WATCH THE FULL TALK

You can watch Jordan's full talk at: bpca.org.uk/cpd-videos or @BritPestControl on YouTube

Jordan Padley of Precision Pest Management shares his practical approach to tackling mice in food factories. As a special guest speaker at BPCA's Young Professional Digital Forum, Jordan talked about risk, strategy, and the

art of working with clients to keep products, people and reputations safe.



When people hear “food factory,” they often imagine a super-clean, well-sealed building where a mouse wouldn’t stand a chance. The reality? It’s a bit like a restaurant - only bigger, busier, and with far more to think about when you’re inspecting, proofing, or treating.

I work mainly in Nottinghamshire, South Yorkshire and Derbyshire, and most of my calls to food factories fall into two camps: the “we’ve seen one mouse” panic, and the “it’s been going on for a while” crisis. Both can be just as tricky.

Why one mouse can be a big problem

The risks to the factory are huge, even with a single rodent. The risks to the factory are huge, even with a single rodent, from reputational damage to enormous financial ramifications. And if contamination hits the product, it’s not just about replacing stock; it’s recalls, damaged relationships, potential business loss, and a very unhappy client pointing the finger at you.

There’s the obvious disease transmission risk from droppings or urine, but also:

- Damage to packaging
- Chewed electrical cabling
- Harm to equipment worth millions
- Knock-on effects for visiting contractors, auditors, and the workforce.

And if an auditor finds evidence you’ve missed, you’re in for some painful follow-up requirements.

The first call-out

Let’s say it’s 7:30am and I get the call. Before I’ve even picked up a torch, I’m thinking: where is the problem?

- Is it near raw ingredients?
- In the mixing area?
- At packaging?
- Or right at dispatch?

That dictates how serious the risk is and what options we’ve got. Then I start thinking about harbourage. Is it a 120-year-old factory full of nooks and crannies, or a shiny new build where the only hiding place is under a pallet? Sometimes you can’t find a gap anywhere, which makes you wonder if the mouse is tucked away inside machinery or just nipping in through a loading bay.

It’s worth trying to work out how long the rodent has been around. Some factories are proactive, checking bait boxes daily, while others only do the minimum their auditor requires. A mouse that’s been around a while will be more comfortable, and possibly harder to catch.

And I always assess hygiene. Is food debris cleared instantly, or are you forever reporting spillages that stay put until the next shift? The cleaner the site, the fewer easy meals for a mouse.

But my number one consideration? Protect the product. That’s what the client cares about most and it’s what keeps the contract alive.

**“Protect the product
- that’s what the
client cares about
most, and it’s what
keeps the contract
alive...”**



Thinking in three dimensions

Mice don’t just walk along floors. They climb, run along cables, hide in wall cavities and use overhead gantries like motorways.

Older factories are often a patchwork of extensions, each creating more voids and cavities. I’ve seen mice and even stored product insects breeding happily out of sight in these spaces. That’s when tracking powders and gels become essential. Personally, I’m a fan of fluorescent types – they’re easier to demonstrate to the client, and you can still see fragments even if cleaning teams have been through.

Doors are another giveaway. A dispatch area with a manual roller door that’s left ajar? You might be chasing a visitor from outside rather than a resident population.

And don’t forget the rules. Different clients have different specifications: BRC, Tesco, M&S, and Morrisons. Each has its own audit quirks. Make sure every control you put in is compliant with their standard as well as the law.

Adapting your plan

Every site (and every infestation) is different. I’ve worked on satellite offices well away from food production, where the mice were travelling above ceiling voids. Bait boxes on the floor were useless; instead, we used traps and contact gels placed where they were actually moving.

Sometimes you can’t exclude them from the whole site, but you can isolate an area. Think like a ship: if there’s a breach, shut the bulkhead doors. If it’s in the warehouse, keep it from getting to production.

Restriction is next. Can you remove or relocate food and water sources? Easier said than done in a wet-cleaning production area, but in a warehouse, it’s more realistic.

Finally comes destruction – physical or chemical control. Traps are my go-to, but if rodenticides are necessary, you may need dispensation from the client’s customer. Always get approval, and always take the pesticide to the pest, using the right formulation for the area.



Tracking and tech

I always use tracking powders and gels, so I know what's been happening between visits. I leave them – and any non-toxic controls – in place until the next routine. That way if we've missed something, we've got four weeks of extra monitoring.

Cameras can be a great add-on if the client allows it. They give you visual proof of where the mouse is going and can make your treatment plan far more targeted.

Know your pest and your client

Mice are sporadic feeders, and increasingly I'm seeing box shyness. They'll exploit small cracks, travel through electrical infrastructure, and follow old scent trails, sometimes years after the original infestation.

Their breeding cycle can be as short as three weeks in warm, food-rich conditions, so you've got to move quickly.

But in a food factory, you can't do much without client cooperation. Many sites have pest-awareness trained staff, and some even have BPCA/RSPH Level 2 trained team members who can check monitors between my visits. That day-to-day input is gold.

I'll speak to hygiene teams, technical managers, quality staff, whoever's my point of contact, and get them involved. I'll also work with them to change things up: different trap styles, moving positions, drilling into wall cavities to place controls. You've got to be flexible.

Follow-ups and modifications

Follow-up frequency should be based on risk. In a high-risk open-food area, I'd be back at least every other day until it's clear. In a warehouse, two to three times a week might be enough. And between visits, I want the site staff looking for signs daily.

Every infestation is also a test of your integrated pest management (IPM). If the mouse got past your existing controls, it's worth reviewing:

- Do you need to change trap or box types?
- Move positions?
- Add attractants?
- Increase proofing?

Sometimes it's worth suggesting extra services like dedicated proofing inspections or hygiene deep-cleans. Clients tend to be most receptive to these ideas when they've got a problem in front of them.



"Think like a ship: if there's a breach, shut the bulkhead doors."

Wrapping up

When you think it's sorted, make sure you can prove it. I like to see at least two or three clear follow-ups before standing down controls. And if there's scope to improve the IPM in that area – whether that's proofing, hygiene, or extra monitoring – now's the time.

Food factories are high-pressure environments when it comes to pest control. There's the product to protect, the client to keep happy, auditors to satisfy, and the pest to outsmart.

The best advice I can give? Keep talking to your client. Be clear, be honest, and work with them, not against them. With the right approach, you can keep the mice out or get them out quickly without losing sight of what really matters: protecting the product, the people, and the business.

SHARE YOUR CASE STUDIES

Got a story, tip, or case study to share with your fellow BPCA members? Whether it's a tricky job you cracked, a clever control method, or a lesson learned the hard way, PPC magazine wants to hear from you. hello@bpca.org.uk

SECOND-TO-NONE: THE RISKS OF SECONDARY POISONING

Alex Wade, Global Technical Marketing Manager for BASF's rodenticide range, explores what secondary poisoning is, why it matters, and how professionals can reduce the risks while maintaining control. Based on his talk at BPCA Digital Forum 32, Alex discusses secondary poisoning and how understanding it is critical to doing our job responsibly.



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Primary vs secondary poisoning

Let's start with the basics. Primary poisoning happens when a non-target species eats bait directly. Secondary poisoning is when another animal eats something that's already consumed the bait. Think of a barn owl dining on a poisoned mouse. The process looks like this:

- You deploy bait
- A target rodent eats it (or sometimes a non-target animal does - that's still primary poisoning)
- Then a predator or scavenger eats that animal, ingesting the active substance stored in its tissues.

That's secondary poisoning in a nutshell.

But here's the kicker: for secondary poisoning to occur, the active ingredient has to be bioaccumulative, meaning it stays in the body rather than being fully metabolised. And that's where the real risk comes in.

A look at the evidence

If you're thinking, "How big a problem is this really?" here's a stat that should make you sit up: almost 90% of barn owls tested in the UK showed traces of anticoagulant rodenticides (source: CRRU Wildlife Reporting Scheme, 2016–2021).

Now, consider this: barn owls don't eat only rats, and certainly not very many adult rats. Their diet is almost entirely composed of non-target species,

including field mice, voles, and shrews. Yet they're still testing positive for rodenticides. That tells us that these chemicals are moving through the food chain in ways we might not always anticipate.

Secondary poisoning isn't just a theoretical risk. It's real, and it's on us as professionals to minimise it wherever possible.

Understanding risk

Risk management is at the heart of professional pest control. When we talk about risk, we're not just thinking about efficacy, we're thinking about the cost to non-target species.

The CRRU Code of Best Practice sets out an escalation hierarchy for control:

- Environmental management
- Physical controls
- Chemical options (only when necessary).

That means start with habitat modification, escalate to traps, and use chemicals as a last resort. The aim? Maximum impact on the infestation, minimum impact on everything else.

But even when chemical control is unavoidable, we've got plenty of tools to reduce risk. Enter the mitigation hierarchy.

The mitigation hierarchy: step by step

Here's how we apply it in the field:

SECOND-TO-NONE: THE RISKS OF SECONDARY POISONING

"Secondary poisoning isn't just a theoretical risk. It's real, and it's on us as professionals to minimise it."



1 ELIMINATION



The most effective way to avoid secondary poisoning? Don't use rodenticides at all. If you can solve the problem with environmental or physical measures, do it. But let's be realistic - that's not always possible.

2 SUBSTITUTION



Choose the right active for the situation. This is where knowledge makes the difference. If secondary risk is high (think: a rural site with lots of raptors), using an active like cholecalciferol instead of an anticoagulant can drastically cut secondary risk. Why? Because cholecalciferol doesn't bioaccumulate - it's metabolised before death occurs.

If primary risk is the bigger concern (e.g. lots of domestic animals on site), anticoagulants with an antidote might be the better choice. There's no one-size-fits-all. The skill is in knowing the tools and matching them to the job.

Strategies in action

Start with the environment. Remove food sources, restrict access to harbourage, and seal entry points before reaching for bait.

Assess and reassess risk

Every site is different and risks can change. Keep that environmental risk assessment close at hand.

Choose your chemistry wisely

If secondary risk is high, think beyond anticoagulants. If primary risk dominates, factor in antidote availability.

Secure everything

A loose bait block in a farmyard is an open invitation for trouble.

Check, check and check again

Visit frequency should match risk. The higher the risk, the more often you go back.

Educate clients

They need to understand why strategy matters, especially if it means a slightly longer timeline for safer control.

Precision matters

Every bait placement, every strategy choice. These aren't just operational decisions; they're decisions about risk. Eliminating risk entirely? Impossible. But bringing it as close to zero as we can? That's what separates the professionals from the rest.

Use the right tool for the right job and wield it like a scalpel, not a hammer. Because when it comes to secondary poisoning, good enough isn't good enough.

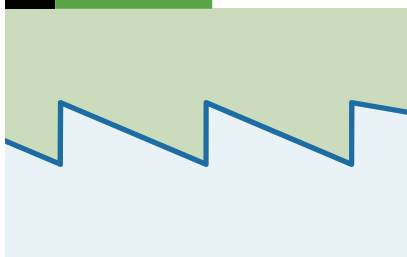


3 ENGINEERING CONTROLS



How we present bait matters. Loose bait can spill. Blocks can be dragged. Pastes might be better in some environments. Whatever you choose, secure placements properly and inspect frequently - especially on high-risk sites.

4 PROCESS CONTROLS



Your baiting strategy influences risk as much as the active you pick. Saturation baiting might feel safe and familiar, but it leaves bait down longer and increases both primary and secondary risks.

Alternatives like pulse baiting and speed baiting can be game changers:

- Pulse baiting (great with single-feed anticoagulants) uses smaller quantities at timed intervals to reduce overconsumption and waste
- Speed baiting (designed for cholecalciferol) uses its unique stop-feed effect to get control quickly while limiting bait intake.

5 MONITORING



Use non-toxic monitors whenever possible. They condition rodents to take bait later, cut risks when infestations aren't active, and help you strike faster when the time comes.



WATCH THE FULL TALK

You can watch Alex's full talk at:
bpca.org.uk/cpd-videos or @
BritPestControl on YouTube



OPINION

FIELDWORK RESEARCH FOR EFFICIENT AND HUMANE PEST CONTROL

Clara Guisan of Pest Solutions shares her experiences with field research projects, the insights they've provided, and why



on-the-ground data collection is essential for improving pest control methods across the UK.



WATCH THE FULL TALK

You can watch Clara's full talk at:
bpca.org.uk/cpd-videos or
 @BritPestControl on YouTube

When you're dealing with rodents that won't touch bait, traps they seem to tiptoe around, or infestations that pop up in the same spot time and time again, you start to ask yourself questions. Why is this happening? How can I prove what's going on? And, more importantly, how can I fix it without wasting time, money or effort?

That's where fieldwork research comes in. For my colleagues and me, getting out there, running trials, and testing our ideas on real jobs has been the key to finding answers. It's not just curiosity - it's survival in an industry where the rules are changing, products are disappearing from the market, and we're expected to deliver effective, humane treatments.

Behavioural resistance: when rodents wise up

Behavioural resistance is, frankly, the bane of my existence. We've seen it most clearly with snap traps. In Edinburgh, my colleague Iain Pendreich set up trail cameras to see exactly how house mice behaved around traps. He found they'd happily

nibble bait up to a certain point - and then stop dead, just before reaching the trap.

Iain McKinnon had a similar problem at a tricky site where mice were ignoring every trap. He switched to multi-catch boxes with ramps and, even without bait, started catching mice. Over a few weeks, catches dropped significantly, droppings became harder to find, and sightings stopped. It was a clear win, backed up by data.

We've also experimented with bait presentation. In Glasgow, colleagues found mice ate more when bait was placed on paper towels instead of in plastic trays.

We tested further in Edinburgh and found that flat presentation, whether on paper or plastic, worked better than bait in shaped containers. It might be about smell, shape, or just ease of access, but it's a clue we can use.

As for bait types, trials in Edinburgh and Glasgow showed grain bait still comes out on top. Interestingly, an older grain formulation performed better than newer ones. That's the kind of insight we need to keep hold of when regulations threaten to remove products.



“Write it down, take the photo, keep the figures. We need more science in our day-to-day work.”

Genetic resistance and knowing your enemy

We’ve contributed to the SASA-led anticoagulant resistance project, which maps resistance in rats and mice across the UK. The process is simple: technicians collect tail samples, pop them in pre-prepared kits and send them off. The results tell us if our local populations are resistant to specific rodenticides, which is vital for compliance and treatment success. Sometimes the findings are unexpected. In Edinburgh, hybrid resistance in rats was recorded, showing that the genetic picture isn’t always straightforward.

Other collaborations, like Paul Westgate’s study on field mouse (*Apodemus sylvaticus*) distribution, have shown these species are more widespread, including in urban areas, than we thought. That matters because treatment strategies for field mice differ from those for house mice.

We’ve also looked at pathogen spread by collecting rodent stool samples for lab analysis. Understanding which pathogens are present helps us explain the public health value of pest control to local authorities and customers.

Learning from outside the UK

A study in Chicago mapped rat complaints against factors like vacant land, rental housing density, and waste management. The result was a predictive heat map of where rat problems were most likely. Imagine applying that here - using our own activity data to predict hotspots, justify preventive contracts, and work with public health teams before infestations get out of hand.

Beyond rodents: insect trials

While rodents dominate the conversation on behavioural resistance, we’ve also trialled different insecticidal dusts for wasp work, tested bed bug monitors with various lures, and compared cockroach baits. These trials provide us with the hard evidence we need to defend effective products and adapt to changing regulations.

The BPCA Academic Relations Working Group is a great example of linking industry and academia. By working with students on real pest control research, we’re building a bank of evidence that benefits everyone.

Why field research matters

Without field research, we’re flying blind. When a regulation change looms, data from trials can help us argue for keeping effective products. When behavioural resistance makes a job harder, recorded evidence can guide us to alternative, more humane methods. And when we share that data, we help the whole industry adapt and improve.

Too often, technicians see something interesting on a job but don’t record it. My message is: write it down, take the photo, keep the figures. We need more science in our day-to-day work, not less. That way, we can highlight our value, explain our challenges, and keep delivering high-quality pest control - no matter what’s thrown at us.

YOUR STORY HERE

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OPINION

ARE OUR CONTROL METHODS FUELLING NEOPHOBIA IN RATS?

Are we the problem? PPC picks the brains of some rodent behaviour experts to explore why some rodents avoid traps, bait stations and monitoring devices, and whether our own control methods could be helping them learn what to avoid. The discussion covers neophobia, behavioural resistance, bait and trap avoidance, customer expectations, and the practical changes pest professionals can make when rodents refuse to play by the rules.



Niall Gallagher PPC
BPCA Technical Manager



Shane McKenna SM
Verus Environmental



Anthony Murphy AM
SETU and RRAG



Nick Eddy NE
Pesttrain



Nicholas Blaszkowicz NB
Representing the CRRU Best Practice Working Group

What is neophobia?

PPC Today's debate is titled: are our control methods fuelling neophobia in rats?

It's a topic that comes up quite a lot and I'm sure most people have probably come across neophobia in some form or another during their career. From a control standpoint, what's going on when rats and mice avoid our traps, avoid our baits, avoid our monitoring devices, and how can we adapt when rodents are adapting alongside us?

We use the term neophobia, but it's not actually covered that much in training. So, what do we think neophobia is?

AM If you're trying to control rodents on a particular site and you're experiencing difficulties, you can probably classify the basic problems into three broad categories: ecological, genetic or behavioural resistance.

Ecological is where you're getting invasions from outside so quickly that it appears you're not managing control. In actual fact, you might be managing control, it's just that your invasions are so quick.

The second one is genetic resistance. Hopefully you're all familiar with the CRRU scheme around testing for the VKORC1 mutations, which can mean that even if a rodent consumes poisonous bait, they're not actually killed by it.

The one we're talking about today is behavioural resistance. This is when the rodents'

behaviour leads them to avoid consuming bait that appears to be both palatable and available.

When we talk about neophobia, neo means new and phobia means fear. So it basically means fear of new things.

In relation to rats and mice, it generally relates to fear of objects rather than food. That's why we use permanent bait stations to try to overcome that fear.

We've been waging this war for thousands of years, so what we have is a pretty wary set of animals. They vary widely in terms of their behaviour, both as individuals and as groups, depending on their history of control.

Behaviour can be learned, in terms of experiences animals might have on a particular site, or it can be instinctive, because of that long history of these animals being chased by predators and by man.

NE It's quite easy to talk about neophobia and end up talking about learned behavioural resistance. They're definitely linked, but I would say neophobia is the natural instinct of the rat to avoid new things.

Behavioural resistance is the learned, over time, avoidance of traps or baits or whatever.

If you've gone to a site where the previous pest controller has done loads and loads of work, you might be experiencing behavioural resistance from the previous controller rather than instinctive resistance to new things.

How does it show up on site?

PPC If we're looking at that learned behaviour, what are we typically seeing when it comes to neophobia?

NE The key one I see in my day-to-day job mainly affects pest control companies doing one-off jobs.

They might not have the luxury of having external boxes or internal boxes down 24/7.

People who sell three to five-part riddances need to be explaining to their customers that, for the first one to two weeks, we might have a neophobic response from the rats and decreased acceptance of baits.

Managing that expectation can manage the customer's expectations of your work. You actually show yourself as a bit of a behavioural scientist as well as a pest controller.

SM I'd jump in on the back of what Nick said about taking over other sites, particularly where the previous pest controller has hit a brick wall.

That's probably the reason you're there, to try and resolve the issue in a more effective way.

Sometimes they've just run out of ideas. They've not been persistent or experimental with their approach. They've just been one-track minded.

The rats and mice have got used to the treatment a lot of the time, and they've never changed it up. Which is a shame really. They should be trying different things, in my opinion.

Should we pre-bait?

PPC Nick mentioned resistance or neophobia for a couple of weeks potentially. Some textbooks quote much longer periods as well.

As we move from old school pest control into a newer style of pest control, what can we do to help combat neophobia? Is there an element of pre-baiting, especially for one-off jobs?

NE My view on pre-baiting is that it's a luxury that some people don't have.

If you're selling, especially on the cheaper end of the market, you might not have the margin to spend one week not necessarily doing anything, especially if you've got the type of customer who's looking over your shoulder.

The counterpoint is: will your treatment be more effective and therefore quicker in the longer run?

If the rats are engaging with your traps on week one and not getting caught, and on week two they're all getting caught, that might be better.

If you're using traps or bait, make sure you've got enough of both, and make sure they're down in week one. We can't keep adding to them, otherwise we're just resetting that neophobic response.

SM It's a little bit hit and miss regionally, and area-based as well. For me, up in the north west, I go to Liverpool or I go to a different town and they behave differently in different areas. If you're working in your own town, you'll know how those rats and mice behave. But if you're travelling to different areas, you'll find different things work.

That's been going on for as long as I've been doing pest control. That's the challenge we all have to overcome.

Are bait preferences local?

NE I came from Devon when I was doing pest control, and when I moved up to Oxford to manage the Oxford team, I did see a big difference in how behaviours changed, and bait preferences.

Personally, I found in countryside areas they preferred more chocolatey-based baits, and in the city centre they preferred more cereal-based baits, because that's not what they had.

I'm sure other pest controllers have found completely the opposite in their local areas.

On a training level, if we can do more localised training based on what people are observing in their day-to-day jobs, or sharing on WhatsApp or Facebook groups, maybe we could have more success as an industry.

PPC It's interesting when you look at formulations, because that inherent safe food they learn is pretty much built in from birth and weaning.

AM We have evidence that rats can show feeding preferences based on what their mother has been feeding on, and what other rats within the



An online CPD quiz based on this feature is now available on the BPCA website. BPCA Registered members and anyone with a MyBPCA account can take a CPD quiz at any time bpca.org.uk/find-cpd or sign up at bpca.org.uk/me

community are feeding on.

If animals return to a burrow and smell of a particular food source, you can see preference for that food source from other animals. The big thing is that, unfortunately, there isn't a single universally acceptable bait or magic ingredient.

You really need to know your individual site. You need to understand the food source that is competing with your bait, and the way the animals are interacting with the environment.

NB One thing we talked about with HSE many years ago was using different formulations in the same bait station. If you've got the same active in that bait station and you're not exceeding the bait point quantity, you could use two different formulations to understand feeding preference.

If the maximum is 200g in a bait point, you could use 100g of one formulation and 100g of another, as long as it's the same active and you stay within the label guidelines.

SM You see all sorts when you're out there. You see rainbow baiting, where people have got lots of different actives, lots of different baits, traps in boxes, and all sorts going on.

But condition is a big thing as well. If they're doing a treatment and the traps have got mouldy bait in, or mouldy lures in the traps, a rat's not going to eat from it.

NE From an audit perspective, I've seen one active ingredient being placed on top of another.

But that clarification is interesting, because if you're using the same active but different formulations, that can be useful.

I had an example with a seafood restaurant where they were using Nutella and not getting anywhere. Then they moved to bits of mussels because that was what the rodents were eating, and they caught them all within two or three weeks.

Should we change the hardware?

PPC As we move away from permanent toxic baiting, where it isn't justified, we're seeing more permanent monitoring and more trap-based systems. Do traps have a role here? And are they part of the neophobia problem?

NB Traps might have a place, but if you're using permanent traps, they need checking frequently, or they need electronic monitoring.

I'd be cautious about permanent snap traps in external boxes on long visit cycles. The other issue is non-toxic monitoring bait.

If you condition non-targets to enter a bait station, then later introduce toxic bait, you may expose those non-targets.

The key with everything is to document what you're doing and why. Then you're giving your own justification.

NE I would advise against having permanent snap traps in an external box on a six or eight-week visit cycle. That's not because traps are wrong. It's because they need checking frequently. And frequently is open to interpretation.

The other thing is that some companies have one bait box or one trap and use it 100% of the time in every situation.

If you're going onto a site with previous control pressure, maybe you need different trap designs, different trap actions and different approaches.

SM I'm doing a small trial myself looking at plastic versus metal traps.

What I've found is that certain plastic traps, like the L-shaped tombstone-style trap or generic snap traps, the rats seem to avoid. The full metal traps, heavier traps, seem to be more successful in certain strategic locations.

That's just what I've been seeing, but I do think there's room for more innovation in trap design. Different styles, materials and ways of constructing them.

PPC BPCA is doing some behavioural resistance work looking at trap types and lure types, so if anyone wants to get involved, let us know.

Are bait boxes always the right answer?

SM I very rarely get mice or rats going into bait boxes, especially in city centres like Manchester.

Pest controllers don't use bait boxes anymore, or externals. They don't go in them.

NB There were historic trials comparing homemade wooden bait stations with plastic ones, and the results were pretty much 10 to one in favour of getting rats into homemade wooden bait stations.

When I'm doing trials on farms, the first thing I do is condition the bait station, removing the fresh plastic smell and the smell of human handling during manufacture.

PPC I've used mouse droppings before, rubbed into a box.

It's similar with mole traps. People will weather them in soil before use.

NB You can use simple things in rural settings. An old tyre propped on bricks with a heavy dustbin lid on top. Or pipe runs with bait secured in the middle.

The important thing is securing bait where possible. The number of times we've seen blocks unsecured, and they just get taken away and cached. Farmers then move stuff at the end of the season and find 200 bait blocks behind a stack of hay bales.

SM That's where the challenge is for technicians. If you're in an urban environment, you may not

have a tyre, a pallet or a pipe. If you're working for a larger company, you might have standard kit and standard training.

So, is it a training issue? Is it an experience issue? Technicians need to know they can think beyond "it's got to go in the box," while still working within the rules.

Does IPM reduce the need to fight neophobia?

NE If you can reduce competing food sources and nesting opportunities, you might not need to overcome every bit of neophobia. At some point, it's got to eat.

So close bins. Remove food sources. Improve housekeeping. Get the customer to play their part.

AM Placement is critically important, particularly for trapping. If a rat has a safe food source of equal or higher value, you're not going to move it off a run that it knows and trusts, where it's going to get to that safe food source.

You need to get your trap placement correct. In Ireland, we often find meat-based lures work better than peanut butter or chocolate. But again, it depends on the site.

Has the loss of glue boards changed the skill set?

PPC With glue boards now restricted or removed in parts of the UK, are we having to relearn some skills?

NE I think so. Glue boards could sometimes mask poor technique or poor placement. If other tools weren't being interacted with, glue boards could still pick up activity and help end the job.

With that option reduced, technicians have to think more about why a control measure isn't working.

How do we sell this to customers?

NE From my operational experience, when I was managing a team, we'd quite regularly sell three visits and then end up comping one or two extra visits to get on top of the problem.

We got to the point where we almost started selling a five-part rat riddance as standard.

That could be your upsell: pre-baiting in the first visits, or an extra visit to make sure you're done at the end. Or if the customer wants it dead cheap, then they can have it in three.

SM I leave it open until I've done the initial survey. Always. I never put a tab on it: three visits, that's it. Never do that, because you'll get egg on your face at some point and you'll end up doing extra visits for free.

Educate the customer. Tell them what you've found because you've done your survey. This issue is at this level, and this is what you feel you can achieve in a certain amount of time.

But if it doesn't happen, you continue. Again, it's education and letting customers know what's going on.

What's the one piece of advice?

PPC If you could give one piece of advice to pest controllers and business owners looking to tackle neophobia, what would it be?

NE Mine would be: experiment.

We tell our customers we're dealing with animals and it's not an exact science. Let's treat it like that. Let's try different traps, different active ingredients.

If you need to chat to your manager, chat to your manager. It's all about experimentation.

SM Think outside the box, within the guidelines and within safety, obviously.

Try different things. Don't have your blinkers on. Think outside the box and you'll get there in the end.

NB I'm going back to my previous point: education.

Even leave customers with a copy of the CRRU Code of Best Practice. See if they want to read through that and educate themselves.

AM If you're trapping, you've got one chance, one experience with a rat.

You need to make sure you use a trap that's powerful enough, and that the rodent is going to interact with the trap in a way that you're going to get a kill, not a miss.

A rat that has had a whack from a trap and escaped is going to be very hard to control afterwards.

You're the person who knows the site. You know the behaviour of the animals on that site.

You know the risks, and you know the owners of the property. You're the person best placed to manage these challenges.

PPC That's a good place to leave it.

Neophobia is not just a technical word. It's what happens when a cautious animal meets a control programme that has not quite thought like an animal.

For pest professionals, the message is clear enough: survey properly, understand the site, vary the approach where needed, document your reasoning and keep the customer with you. And, as ever with rats, don't assume they've read the method statement.



WATCH THE FULL DEBATE

Members can watch the full one-hour debate over on the BPCA website.

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FRIENDWATCH

BATS IN BUILDINGS

SPEED READ

- The UK has 17 breeding bat species, and all of them have been recorded using buildings to some degree
- Roosts are protected by law, whether or not bats are there at the time
- Bats are particularly vulnerable during maternity season and hibernation
- Pest control work can risk disturbing bats, blocking access points, or exposing bats to harmful chemicals
- Timing, localised treatment, bat-friendly methods and professional advice can help work go ahead safely and legally.

Why bats matter

The Bat Conservation Trust is the leading non-governmental organisation in the UK solely devoted to conserving bats and the landscapes they rely on. One of those landscapes is the built environment.

That is where pest professionals come in. If you are working in roof spaces, lofts, wall cavities, old buildings, houses, offices or commercial premises, there is a real chance you may come across bats or bat roosts.

And because bats and their roosts are protected, it is important to know what you are looking at before work begins.

A brief introduction to British bats

Bats are mammals, and they are the only true flying mammals.

Worldwide, we know of more than 1,500 species, and new ones are still being discovered. Around the world, bats vary hugely in size and diet. They may eat insects, pollen, nectar, fruit, and even other bats and birds.

There are three species of vampire bat, but they are only found in South America, so they are not a problem for us here.

In the UK, we have 17 species of bats that breed here. All of our British bats are nocturnal, all eat insects, spiders and other invertebrates, and all hibernate during the winter.

They are also long-lived. Even some of our smallest bats can live for well over 10 years. The oldest bat ever recorded was a wild Brandt's bat found in Siberia. It had been ringed by researchers in 1964 and was recaptured in 2005, making it at least 41 years old. For a tiny mammal weighing just a few grams, that is extraordinary.

Our bats only have one young per year. That makes them especially vulnerable to population decline, because numbers cannot recover quickly if roosts or foraging areas are lost.

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"British Bats at Home". Biodiversity Heritage Library (Flickr). Public domain

Emma Turnbull, Biodiversity Training Officer at the Bat Conservation Trust, explains why bats matter, how they use buildings, and what pest professionals need to consider when carrying out work where bats may be present.



What is a bat roost?

A bat roost is any place used by a bat for shelter. Importantly, it is still classed as a roost even when the bat is not present.

Bats do not build nests. They do not collect nesting materials or chew things up to create a nest. Instead, they hang up or creep into a crack or crevice.

That means ordinary buildings, roof spaces, gaps, soffits, fascia boards, cavity walls and other small features can all become important.

Some bats, such as brown long-eared bats and greater horseshoe bats, may roost in loft spaces, hanging from the underside of roof lining. Others, such as pipistrelles, may tuck themselves behind lifted fascia boards or into cavity walls, accessing the building through gaps in mortar or under tiles.

It is worth remembering just how small a gap bats can use. A pipistrelle bat can get into a gap of around 10mm. They do not necessarily need to fly into a space; they can land next to an access point and crawl in.

That matters for pest professionals because many of the features used by bats can also be used by rodents, wasps or other pests.

I once carried out a survey on a property where, just as dusk was coming in, a swarm of wasps became very active around their entrance. Not long afterwards, pipistrelle bats started emerging from a gap slightly further along the roof. Once it was dark and we used infrared cameras, we could see the bats emerging nearer to the wasp nest.

My assumption was that the bats had annoyed the wasps before emerging. Buildings can hold more than one story at once.

When bats use buildings

Bats may use buildings at any time of year, but they are often most obvious between June and August, when females form maternity colonies.

During the summer, bats fly out at night to feed on insects and return to the roost during the day. These roosts can be especially vulnerable because large numbers of bats may be gathered together, and the young may be unable to fly.

A maternity roost of soprano pipistrelles can include hundreds of bats, sometimes even a thousand or more. Young bats are completely dependent on their

mothers. They suckle milk until they are weaned, which can take four to six weeks.

In some cases, all the females of a species in the surrounding area may gather in a single roost. Disturbing or damaging that roost could therefore affect the entire local population.

In winter, the requirements are different. Bats need somewhere cool, humid, stable and undisturbed for hibernation. They may be alone or in small scattered groups, hidden in crevices, under slates or deep in gaps in mortar.

During hibernation, bats are metabolising at a very low level. They may not produce droppings as obvious evidence, and they may be completely out of sight.

They are also extremely vulnerable to disturbance. If a hibernating bat is woken, it can take 30 to 40 minutes to fully come out of torpor, and the energy used may not be replaced because food sources are scarce or non-existent in the coldest months.

Signs of bats in buildings

One of the most common reasons I am asked to look in lofts is to identify droppings.

Bat droppings can sometimes be found in large numbers, depending on the species and the type of roost. A useful clue is that bat droppings crumble easily when squashed, because they are made up of insect fragments that cannot be digested. Rodent droppings do not squash in the same way.

The location of droppings can also help. A line of droppings under the ridge of a roof, for example, is often associated with brown long-eared bats.

You may also find feeding remains. Brown long-eared bats often use feeding perches where they hang up to eat moths. They discard the wings, so you may find piles of moth wings under a perch.

Outside the building, there may be droppings below an access point or staining where bats repeatedly enter and leave. Oils from their fur can leave marks on timber or around gaps.

If you find a large number of droppings in a loft during summer, it is sensible to assume bats may be present until you know otherwise. The

best next step is to get advice, either from an ecologist or through the Bat Conservation Trust National Bat Helpline.



An online CPD quiz based on this feature is now available on the BPCA website. BPCA Registered members and anyone with a MyBPCA account can take a CPD quiz at any time bPCA.org.uk/find-cpd or sign up at bPCA.org.uk/me



"British bats do not deserve to be feared, but they do need to be treated with respect."

Bats are protected

Bat populations have decreased in both range and number, and that has dictated the level of protection they need.

Bats make up around a quarter of all UK mammal species. That surprises many people. If you ask someone to name a British mammal, they will probably say a deer, fox, badger or rabbit. But a quarter of our mammal species are bats.

In simple terms, it is an offence to deliberately capture, injure or kill bats. It is also an offence to deliberately disturb bats in a way that would affect their ability to survive, hibernate, breed or rear young, or significantly affect their local distribution or abundance.

That could include waking bats during hibernation, disturbing a maternity colony, entombing bats, or carrying out work during the breeding period. It is also an offence to damage or destroy a breeding site or resting place. In other words, a roost.

This is really important: a known roost is protected whether bats are present at the time or not. Under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981, as amended, it is also an offence to intentionally or recklessly obstruct access to a bat roost or disturb a bat at a roost.

So, for example, you cannot simply block up a known roost entrance, even if you do not see bats there that day.

What pest professionals need to consider

When pest control work may affect a roost, the key is to risk assess the situation and look for ways to reduce the likelihood of harm or an offence being committed.

Depending on the work required, a licence may be needed. This would be granted by Natural England, Natural Resources Wales, NatureScot or the Northern Ireland Environment Agency, depending on where the work is taking place.

Whether a licence is required will depend on the extent of the work and the outcome of surveys carried out by an ecologist.

In some cases, work may be able to go ahead without a licence, particularly if disturbance can be avoided, access is retained, and the

work is done when bats are absent.

In other cases, especially where bats may be disturbed, or a roost site or access point will be lost, a licence is likely to be needed. The licence application will include mitigation, compensation and monitoring methods. For pest control, a

major risk is the use of chemical treatments, including insecticides and rodenticides, which bats may come into contact with. Bats groom themselves regularly, so if a harmful substance gets onto their fur, they are likely to ingest it.

The best way to reduce that risk is often to carry out work when bats are absent from the roost. We may also advise localised application, wiping up excess or spillages, and avoiding treatments that could expose bats unnecessarily.

Blocking access is another risk. Many pest entry points are at ground level, but where gaps are higher up, there is a possibility that you could block the entrance bats are using to access a roost.

If there is any doubt, an ecologist or volunteer roost visitor can help identify access points.

Disturbance is also important. There are times of year when bats are especially vulnerable, so timing matters. For example, it may be better to place enclosed bait traps outside maternity and hibernation periods. Even if the traps themselves are unlikely to contact bats, the repeated checking and replacing of traps could disturb the roost.

Sometimes the solution is about adjusting the schedule and increasing gaps between visits, reducing the need to disturb the area.

There are usually workarounds. The important thing is to think about bats before work starts, rather than discovering the problem halfway through. Or, to put it more simply: time it right, and get someone to confirm it if you are not sure.

Sticky traps and fly papers

Sticky traps are a serious issue for bats.

As a bat carer, I have had bats brought to me stuck to insect traps and fly paper. The worst case I dealt with was a brown long-eared bat caught in a triangular insect trap.

I did manage to release it using olive oil, but it was stressful and time-consuming, and this sort of situation is often fatal.

To reduce the risk, sticky traps should be avoided where bats may come into contact with them. If they have to be used, think very carefully about placement. Covering them or placing them at floor level can reduce access by bats.

For cluster fly issues, it is worth looking for bat-friendly trap options, such as partially enclosed traps.

If fly paper is being considered, one possible workaround is to place it inside a bird feeder so bats cannot reach the sticky paper.

The main principle is simple: avoid control methods that put bats at risk.

What about disease?

Questions about bats and disease often come up, especially since Covid. It is important to

understand that British bats are very different from some bat populations elsewhere in the world. The species, ecology, scale, proximity to people and wider circumstances are not the same everywhere.

There is a lot of research in this area, and it is not something that can be neatly summed up in a couple of lines.

The notable disease concern in the UK is European bat lyssavirus, which is a type of rabies. In the UK, only two of our 17 breeding species have been found to carry the virus: Daubenton's bats and serotine bats.

The risk to people is very low, and fluid-to-fluid contact is needed. In practical terms, the risk would be if you were bitten or scratched by a bat.

Pest professionals should not be handling bats. Bat carers wear gloves, are vaccinated and follow established procedures. If someone is bitten or scratched by a bat, they should seek medical advice because post-exposure treatment may be needed.

British bats do not deserve to be feared, but they do need to be treated with respect.

Final thoughts

Bats are part of our built environment. For pest professionals, the key message is not that bats stop work from happening. It is that we need to understand where they may be, how they use buildings, and what the law requires.

In many cases, with good timing, sensible precautions and the right advice, work can go ahead while still protecting bats and their roosts.

The best approach is to pause, look for evidence, consider the season, assess the risks, and ask for advice where needed.

Bats are fascinating animals; they are important indicators of environmental health, and they are a major part of our native mammal fauna.

And honestly, once you start learning about them, they really do become addictive.

Useful resources and training

- bats.org.uk
- National Bat Helpline: 0345 1300 228
- bats.org.uk/our-work/training-and-conferences-hub/popular-courses
- killgermtraining.com/killgerm-courses/bat-awareness-for-pest-controllers



WATCH THE FULL SESSION

This article is based on Emma's BPCA Digital Forum talk on bats in buildings, which is available to watch back on BPCA's YouTube channel. Watch the full talk on bat roosts, legal protection, pest control risks and practical ways to work around bats safely. youtube.com/bpcavideo



THE JOY

AN ANTHROPOLOGICAL TAKE ON LIFE AS A PEST PROFESSIONAL



Dr Hannah Fair, a human geographer at the University of Southampton, has spent the past few years getting under the skin of professional pest management. After joining technicians in their vans, talking to pest professionals across the UK and throwing herself into industry events, she shares what she discovered about the freedom, challenge and camaraderie that make so many people genuinely love working with pests.

For the past few years, I've been on an anthropological expedition to understand a unique and mysterious culture: the world of professional pest control. I've been out in the vans, interviewing technicians online, and attending trade fairs. While my university colleagues have been busy making maps and testing soil, I've carried bait boxes, taken shots off an ice pigeon sculpture, narrowly avoided being stung by wasps, and embarrassingly failed to escape the PestTech escape room. I've been immersing myself in professional pest control in order to better understand how the industry works and what social and economic value it provides, as part of my broader research into how households in the UK manage domestic pest infestations.

I interviewed twenty-one members of the industry from across the UK, and went out on the job with technicians, seeing how they worked in practice and trying not to get in the way. I wasn't trying to achieve a statistically significant sample but instead to understand pest controllers' experiences in depth, including the challenges they faced in terms of customers' expectations and attitudes and threats to the toolkit.



So, what did I find out?

In one of my earliest interviews a pest management professional said to me "I just love the whole job. There's no negatives to it. No repetition". This sentiment was repeated throughout my research, both by old hands and recent recruits. I didn't expect to hear such positive accounts of working in pest control because pest control is what psychologists have labelled as 'dirty work'. 'Dirty work' is characterised by working in physically unclean spaces, dealing with socially undesirable people (or creatures), or carrying out morally tainted actions (such as animal killing).

Key to the idea of dirty work is that those who do it - the 'dirty workers' - themselves become socially stigmatised and their work is devalued, despite how useful it is for society.

And this lack of public appreciation was clear in the case of pest control. I repeatedly heard about technicians being asked to park away from the home they were visiting, enter via a back door, or to use vans without logos, to avoid the public embarrassment of requiring pest control. Technicians were refused use of customers' bathrooms, and their expertise was regularly downplayed. As one interviewee told me: "You're seen as a kind of neanderthal or a knuckle dragger that hits small furry animals with sticks". Clearly there are downsides to pest control. It's underappreciated hard work, dealing with problems most people don't even want to think about. Given this, I wondered why did so many pest controllers seem to love their jobs so much?

As one interviewee explained to me, it came down to three key things: "the freedom, the challenge, the camaraderie amongst the people". Freedom. Challenge. Camaraderie, or maybe connection. These are what I describe as 'the joy of pests'.

Freedom

For many interviewees, freedom was due to being an independent contractor or small business owner. As one sole trader explained to me "If I'm running my own company, it's an investment for my future and everything for me, for my children. So rather than working for somebody and getting paid, at least now I'm working and building something". This is reflected in the common professional trajectory of technicians being trained up in larger companies and then setting out to start their own businesses. There's a question about whether this might shift as there are more mergers and acquisitions and a reduction in the number of SMEs.

However, it wasn't just pest controllers who were their own bosses who experienced a sense of freedom. Many interviewees, including from larger companies, described the freedom they experienced over their own schedule as key to their workplace satisfaction and happiness. One explained that "holding your own diary and making appointments when you want to and having complete control over your working life is just awesome". This suggests that increased control and surveillance over employees' actions (such as van trackers) might be detrimental to their experiences and diminish their enthusiasm for their work.



OF PESTS

Challenge

Variety was also key, in terms of the range of pests encountered and the types of work, particularly for those with a balance of residential callouts and regular commercial contracts. Some of the joy also comes from the pests themselves. I remember at PestEx an attendee had anonymously answered the question “What’s the best thing about working in pest control?” with “Killing rats is very complicated”. The everyday problem-solving challenges pests present prevent the job from becoming boringly repetitive, and they encourage technicians to keep learning and experimenting with new approaches.

Connection

Connection was key in terms of camaraderie with other pest controllers, compassion towards customers in difficult situations, and curiosity towards the pests themselves. Pest control can be lonely or isolating, even for those working at larger companies, and I saw how important friendships across the industry were. Even though lots of sole traders are technically in direct commercial competition with each other, I witnessed a lot of generosity, with professionals helping each other to solve problems.

With residential work it was evident how socially impactful pest control is. One interviewee

described how one of the best parts of the job was engaging with customers and “actually just helping them week-to-week, seeing the improvement of their mood. I find it so, so rewarding”.

Many pest controllers used their fluid pricing structures to act compassionately, provide discounts, setting up instalment plans or bundling in additional visits at no extra cost for lower-income or retired households. However, dealing with customers could also be one of the most frustrating parts of the job, especially when customers ignored professional advice. Some technicians also found it upsetting to witness the unsanitary conditions some vulnerable people were living in.

Finally, fascination and curiosity about the pests themselves also brought an extra dimension of enjoyment to the job. Technicians introduced me to the wonder of stored product insects and the mysteries of mouse behaviour. Many seemed to have a ‘passion pest’: those they were most intrigued by and often best at managing.

Why does this matter?

Perhaps you’re thinking “I could have told you that”. And maybe you did. I’m sure I’ve got some former interviewees among the PPC readership. But if these findings seem obvious or commonsense to you, that’s a good sign, as it

helps validate the accuracy of what I found. And this piece of research wasn’t designed to tell pest controllers something new about themselves. Its aim is to help those outside the industry understand the world of professional pest control better and challenge some of their assumptions. I’ve shared these findings in much greater detail in an academic article and in a piece on The Conversation, which has had over 40,000 reads, has been translated into French and even got me invited onto Breakfast Radio in Perth, Australia. I want to encourage people to rethink what sorts of work are enjoyable, valued, and valuable for society. These are pressing issues in a context of high unemployment, fears about AI causing redundancies, and many people feeling unfulfilled and alienated at work.

What next?

I feel like I’ve got a handle on the joy of pest control, but I also want to understand some of its more challenging aspects, particularly humane dispatch, as discussed in a previous PPC article. I’d like to find out more about what ensuring a good death means for pest controllers and how they think and feel about the process. If you’re up for discussing this or having me along with you in the van for a day, you can reach me on h.i.fair@soton.ac.uk or find me on [linkedin.com/in/hannahlfair/](https://www.linkedin.com/in/hannahlfair/)

“The challenges pests present prevent the job from becoming boringly repetitive.”



Further reading

For a more detailed account of my findings see my piece in The Conversation aimed at a general audience (theconversation.com/the-joy-of-pests-study-reveals-why-rat-catchers-are-so-happy-in-their-work-284394) or a longer piece aimed at academics: ‘The Joy of Pests: Camaraderie, Wonder and Dialectical Autonomy in UK Professional Pest Management’ (2026) published in Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers doi.org/10.1111/tran.70078

MEET THE MEMBER

RELOCATION, RELOCATION: MOVING COUNTRY, FINDING COMMUNITY



Taylan Karakas is the owner of BPCA Manufacturer and Distributor member, Purean Solutions and Technology, based in Milton Keynes. Purean provides Insectram, a pest management software platform designed around data, reporting and technology. PPC magazine spoke to Taylan about relocating from Turkey, the importance of a connected sector and what he's learned from working across pest management sectors in two different countries.

PPC How did you first get into pest management?

TK My father worked for the agricultural department of the Turkish government for about 50 years, dealing with pests. When he retired in 1999, he started a pest control business with my mother, my sister and me.

I was studying chemical engineering at the time. When I moved to another part of Turkey to attend university, I started a second branch of the family business.

Over the next few years, we opened around 20 branches across Turkey and worked with franchisees too. At one point, we had around 350 people in the company.

I was also a technician for 16 years. That experience has been very important to me because I understand the problems technicians face.

PPC Where did the idea for Insectram come from?

TK It came from a very practical problem.

We had lots of technicians and lots of vehicles moving around Turkey. Some technicians were working in hotels, others in food production and others in residential pest management.

We could see where the vehicles were. But we didn't always know what was happening inside the buildings.

Technicians were recording pest activity on paper. They had to remember which monitoring points had activity, whether it was rats, mice or flying insects, and then bring all that information back to the office.

When you have a large number of technicians, that becomes a nightmare.

I wanted to solve that problem for myself. Then I realised it could be useful for other pest management companies too.

PPC How did that lead to your UK business?

TK After graduating from Chemical Engineering at Middle East Technical University, I completed training around British Retail Consortium (BRC) auditing, food, sustainability and quality standards. I started developing the software in 2013. By 2017, we had our first software clients in Turkey.

Then, in 2018, I moved to London and started Purean. We wanted to be close to the expertise around BRC and BPCA.

We wanted to understand the standards and the needs of the market we were working in. We've now been trading in the UK for around eight years.

PPC What was it like establishing the business in the UK?

TK It was interesting! At first, I came on my own to establish the business and see how things would develop. Then the Covid-19 pandemic happened and everything became more difficult.

I went back to Turkey for about two and a half years. At the end of 2023, I came back to the UK, this time with my family. We moved to Milton Keynes and moved the company's head office from London to Milton Keynes too.

I really like being in the Midlands. From Milton Keynes, I can reach our UK clients quite easily. It's a very good location for us.

We have found the business support invaluable. Earlier this year, we were selected by the British Library's Business and IP Centre (BIPC) to take part in their competitive scale-up programme, Get Ready for Business Growth. Having the backing of such a prestigious UK national institution is a massive milestone not just for us, but a proud recognition for technology innovation within the UK pest management sector.

PPC What does your day-to-day look like at Purean?

TK We don't just provide software. We work closely with our clients and support them in the field. Recently, I was with a client in London setting up the software at one of their sites. We also trained their client because they will be using the system too.

They can see the heat maps and trends, and they can show the information to auditors when they visit.

I like that part of the business because we are close to our clients. We come from the field ourselves, so we understand what technicians and customers need.

And everyone works differently, so being able to understand that and adapt to it is really important.

PPC Why was joining BPCA important to you?

TK I really wanted to be part of the UK pest management community; not just as an observer but an active part of it.

BPCA is an authority for the sector, and I wanted to be close to that expertise. We also wanted to make sure our software could support the standards our customers are working to.

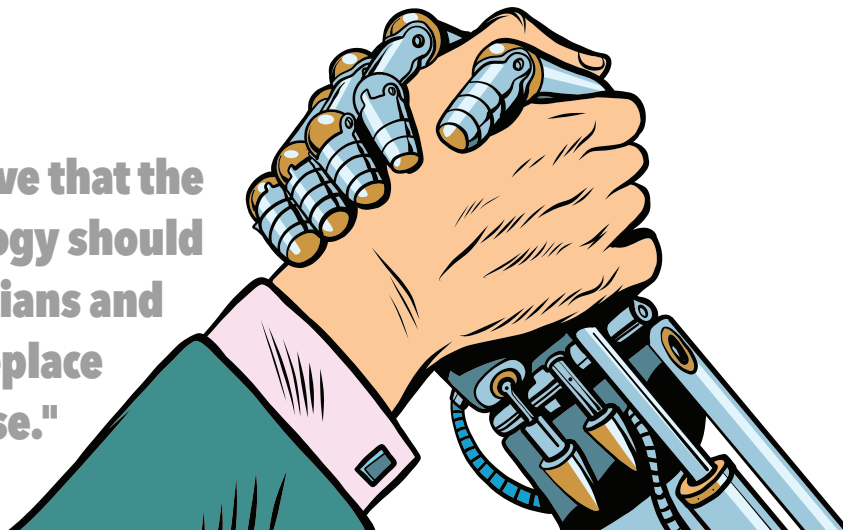
The UK has a very close pest management community. BPCA brings people together through the magazine, online events, PestEx and other activities.

Coming from a place where that community doesn't exist in the same way, that is something I really appreciate.

PPC Is that a big difference between the UK and Turkey, the community?

TK I think the UK sector is more academic and more connected.

"I still believe that the technology should help technicians and shouldn't replace their expertise."



There is an association in Turkey, but I don't think it brings pest controllers together in the same way as BPCA does.

Here, you have exhibitions, digital forums, in-person events and opportunities for people to meet each other. That connection is important.

If people working in the same sector don't have connections with each other, the sector can become fragmented.

People don't know what other companies are doing or what is happening around them. There's no support system or a way of keeping in the loop. In the UK, I think BPCA helps create that connection.

PPC Is that why you wanted to get involved with BPCA committees?

TK Yes, I wanted to participate.

After coming back to the UK with my family, I wanted to get involved with the Association's committees and activities. I wanted to learn more about what BPCA is doing, but also think about what we can contribute as a technology provider.

I would like to hear the voices of people in the sector, but I also want my voice to be heard. We all have different experience and different expertise.

Insectram is very heavily built around that need to communicate too, so we know that it's not just about the traditional ways people think of communication that are important.

You can't provide that kind of service properly by sitting in an office and guessing. You have to stay close to the people using the technology and understand what they need.

PPC You're really passionate about technology. Are there other ways you're implementing new technology at the moment?

TK The landscape is evolving very quickly.

With Insectram, we're the first platform to introduce predictive AI insights that simultaneously support operational technician guidance and audit-readiness. The idea is to help the sector move from reactive treatment to proactive prevention.

Right now, we're working with monitoring sensors, electronic fly killer cameras, artificial intelligence cameras and other connected technology. The important thing is that the data comes from the real site and the real technician.

We bring that information together so technicians, clients and auditors can see the bigger picture. Artificial intelligence is now becoming a bigger part of that.

For example, the system can look at historical data and identify patterns that might not be obvious when you're looking at one visit at a time.

I still believe that the technology should help technicians and shouldn't replace their expertise. But we need to utilise it to make us more efficient and better at our jobs.

PPC You have a strong interest in sustainability too. Where did that come from?

TK When I was working in the automotive industry, I learned that you can't look at one part of a business in isolation.

You have to think about the environmental impact, the people you work with and the wider picture.

After returning to the family business, I worked with different quality, food safety, environmental and occupational health and safety standards. When you bring all those things together, you get sustainability.

I also work as a sustainability auditor, doing audits for the Green Globe Foundation in the UK, Turkey and some surrounding countries.

That experience influences how I think about pest management too. For example, it can be about using the right amount of stock, reducing waste and making sure products and equipment are used in the right place.

Even something as simple as where you position an insect light trap can have a sustainability impact.

PPC What do you think the UK sector can learn as pest pressures change?

TK We need to keep collecting good data and listening to what is happening in the field.

With changing weather patterns, pest activity may change too. We may see different levels of activity or changes in where pests are found.

The data we collect through our UK users is already showing us where certain problems are increasing.

That means we all need to be prepared. It isn't only about technicians. Customers need to understand these changes too. We need more knowledge across the whole sector.

PPC What excites you most about the future?

TK My dream is to build a robot technician.

I don't think our technicians will be unhappy about that. I think they will be happy because their expertise would lead the technology.

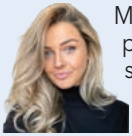
Imagine a robot walking around a site for 24 hours, taking photographs and videos, finding gaps and crevices, identifying food spillages and collecting information.

It could act like a pre-auditor and give the technician the information they need.

A technician who manages 50 sites today might eventually be able to manage 200 or 500 sites with that technology supporting them. That's my dream.

THE MOST POWERFUL TOOL IN YOUR PEST CONTROL KIT? YOUR PHONE

SOCIAL MEDIA AND DIGITAL SKILLS FOR PEST PROFESSIONALS



Maya Ings, PR Account Director at Shepherd PR, shares practical advice from BPCA's social media and digital skills bootcamp, showing pest professionals how to use the smartphone in their pocket to build trust, win work and strengthen their reputation online.



An online CPD quiz based on this feature is now available on the BPCA website. BPCA Registered members and anyone with a MyBPCA account can take a CPD quiz at any time bpca.org.uk/find-cpd or sign up at bpca.org.uk/me



"The most powerful tool in your pest control kit is already in your pocket."

How many of you have a camera, a video studio, an editing suite and a publishing platform in your pocket right now? I'm willing to bet every single one of you does.

Your phone is one of the most powerful tools in your pest business. And yet, most pest professionals I meet either underuse it or avoid using it altogether because they think:

- "I'm not good on camera"
- "I don't know what to post"
- "It won't look professional"
- "I don't have time."

You're busy. You're out on jobs. You're solving problems. Social media can feel like an add-on.

But if you're not showing what you do, someone else is. And that someone else might not be as qualified, compliant or professional as you.

Let's make this practical. Here's how to use your phone to create content that builds trust, demonstrates expertise and wins work, without turning you into a full-time influencer.

Start with why you're posting

Before you even touch your camera, ask yourself one thing: what is this for?

In pest management, your content usually falls into one of three categories:

1. Building trust
2. Demonstrating expertise
3. Showing proof of work.

If you can't answer why you're posting something, don't post it.

A dead rodent on a kitchen floor with no context? That doesn't build trust. A short explanation of how you safely resolved a rat issue in a commercial unit, without breaching client confidentiality? That shows professionalism and competence.

Always think: would I be happy for a potential commercial client to see this? If the answer is no, rethink it.

Taking better photos on site

Let's start with still images. Before-and-after photos are gold in pest management. They show impact instantly. Here's how to improve them immediately.

Get the lighting right

Light is everything. If you're in a loft, under a sink or in a plant room, your first instinct is often to snap and move on. But poor lighting makes everything look worse.

Use your phone torch if needed. Move slightly so the light falls across the subject rather than directly at it. Avoid standing with a bright window behind you, as this will silhouette your subject.

And clean your camera lens. Honestly. It's the simplest improvement you can make.

Think about framing

Before you press the button, look at what's in the frame. Is there anything identifying the client? Addresses, paperwork, family photos? Remove or crop them out. Compliance and confidentiality are non-negotiable.

Try to:

- Keep the main subject central
- Avoid too much clutter
- Take one wider shot for context and one close-up for detail.

If you're showing proofing work, make sure it's clear what has been done. A vague shot of a wall doesn't tell a story. A clear image of the mesh installed does.

Make before-and-after obvious

Take the "before" shot from the same angle as the "after" shot. It sounds basic, but it makes a huge difference.

Consistency makes the transformation clearer. It also looks far more professional on your website or LinkedIn page.

Staying compliant and professional

This is where pest control differs from many other trades.

You operate in a regulated environment. You handle chemicals. You work in sensitive locations.

Never:

- Show pesticide labels in a way that could be misused
- Disclose client identities without permission
- Post images that could be deemed distressing without context.

Always align your content with the professional standards expected of BPCA members. Your social media presence should reinforce that professionalism, not undermine it.

If you're unsure whether something is appropriate, don't post it.

Measuring whether it's working

You don't need to obsess over likes.

Instead, look for:

- Enquiries mentioning your social media
- Increased website visits
- Engagement from local businesses
- Comments asking questions.

For commercial pest control businesses, LinkedIn can be particularly effective. For domestic-focused companies, Facebook and Instagram often perform well.

But the platform matters less than the consistency and quality of what you're sharing.

Confidence comes from practice

The final thing I always say is this: the first video will feel awkward. So will the second. By the tenth, you'll be far more natural.

Your competitors are not waiting until they feel 100% confident. They are learning in public. You can too, while maintaining professionalism.

Remember, your expertise is your advantage. You deal with complex biological, environmental and compliance issues every day. Explaining one small part of that on camera is well within your capability.

THE MOST POWERFUL TOOL IN YOUR PEST CONTROL KIT? YOUR PHONE

Filming short videos without overthinking it

Video can feel intimidating, but it doesn't have to be. You don't need fancy transitions, dramatic music or scripted monologues. You need clarity and confidence.

Keep it short and focused

One tip. One job. One explanation.

For example:

- "Here's how we identified this as a mouse issue rather than a rat issue"
- "This is why you shouldn't block a burrow without proper treatment"
- "A quick look at how we've proofed this loading bay."

Aim for 30 to 60 seconds. That's it.

Sound matters more than visuals

People will forgive slightly shaky footage. They won't forgive bad audio.

If you're outside in the wind, move somewhere sheltered. If you're in a noisy plant room, wait or reposition. Speak clearly and slightly slower than normal. You don't need expensive microphones to start. Just be aware of your surroundings.

Talk to one person

Don't imagine you're broadcasting to thousands. Imagine you're explaining something to a client.

That tone is natural, credible, and exactly what builds trust online.

Editing quickly and simply

You do not need to become a full-time editor. Your phone already has basic editing tools. Use them to:

- Trim the start and end
- Adjust brightness slightly if needed
- Crop out anything inappropriate.

There are also free apps that let you add captions. Captions are worth doing because many people watch without sound.

But don't let editing become a barrier. Done is better than perfect.

What to post as a pest professional

One of the biggest sticking points in the webinar was this question: what should I actually post?

Here are some reliable content types for pest management businesses.

Job highlights

Share anonymised case studies:

- The problem
- The solution
- The outcome.

Keep it factual. Avoid scare tactics. Focus on professionalism.

Seasonal advice

Pests are seasonal. Your content should reflect that.

In autumn, talk about rodents seeking shelter. In summer, discuss wasps or flies. This positions you as proactive and knowledgeable.

"If you can't answer why you're posting something, don't post it.."



Behind the scenes

Show your equipment checks. Your van setup. Your CPD training. Your team meetings.

Professional clients, in particular, want reassurance that you are structured, compliant, and serious about standards.

Myth busting

There's a lot of misinformation online.

Short posts correcting common myths can position you as the voice of reason. Just make sure you're accurate and not criticising competitors.

Planning so it doesn't become a burden

The biggest myth about social media is that you have to post daily. You don't. One solid, useful post a week is better than five rushed ones.

Here's a simple system:

- Capture content during the week when you're on jobs
- Set aside 30 minutes once a week to post
- Use scheduling tools if that helps.

Think of it as part of your business development, not an optional extra.

The bigger picture

At Shepherd PR, we've worked with trade associations and technical industries for more than 25 years. One thing is consistent across every sector. The businesses that communicate clearly and confidently about what they do are the ones that build stronger reputations.

In pest management, reputation is everything. Trust is everything. Professionalism is everything. Your phone is not a distraction. It's a tool. Used properly, it helps you:

- Demonstrate competence
- Educate clients
- Stand out from unqualified operators
- Support the wider perception of the industry as skilled and professional.

You don't need to be flashy. You don't need to go viral. You just need to be clear, consistent and credible. And you've already got everything you need in your pocket.



LIKE THIS ARTICLE AND WANT TO WATCH BACK THE KEYNOTE?

All BPCA webinars are available for BPCA members to watch back in their MyBPCA areas. bpca.org.uk/cpd-videos





MEET THE MEMBER

BIRDS, BRAINS AND BROTHERLY LOVE WITH REAPER BIRD CONTROL

Brothers Carl and Craig Hoult are the team behind Suffolk-based Reaper Bird Control. They talk to PPC magazine about falling into pest management, taking the leap into their own business, learning to live with quiet months and why bird work is as much about people as it is pigeons.

The Hoult brothers take flight

PPC Let's go right back to the beginning. Craig, how did you get into pest management?

Cr Not at all by design. I'm a proud Lowestoft lad, and I worked on the docklands for about 13 years. Carl and our former boss at Abate Pest Control had been trying to get me into pest control for years.

Then I got made redundant and ended up flitting around between jobs, basically just keeping a roof over my head. Carl approached me again, and I finally went for it.

I got sent down to London as a foot technician. You never knew what you were going to be doing. You'd have ten or 15 jobs, hit the Underground and go from German cockroaches to bed bugs, fleas and urban foxes.

It was during Covid too, so sometimes there were maybe another two people on the entire Underground. It was surreal.

I've now been in pest management about six years, and I'm Operations Director, which I still can't really get my head around. It's been a wild ride. Carl really did put me back on a path.

PPC Carl, your route was fairly unconventional too.

Ca I moved back to England as an ex-diver with no idea what to do with myself. Craig and I started working on Lowestoft Docks,

painting boats and doing handyman work. We ended up running a kickboxing club together.

One of the students was a service manager for a pest control company and asked if I wanted to do a bit of cash-in-hand work checking containers for cockroaches. The rest is history.

I just loved it. It was an instant fascination. I thought, "I've got to get away from teaching kids karate and kickboxing."

I was done with kids. They're the top of the pest level.

Funny enough, I spent my first couple of months in bird management. I hadn't even seen a rat. I think that's where the love for bird management came from. It's niche and you can see what you've left behind. It's about leaving a mark.

Leaving the nest

PPC What made you decide to set up Reaper?

Ca We were spoiled in our first company. It was family-run and a cut above the rest service-wise.

It was home for a very long time. Then bigger companies came in and bought up the business, and we just didn't have the mentality for the corporate side.

We knew we had the skills and wanted to carry on doing the work, but we were in the wrong environment. So we took the jump.

Cr Carl came to me a few months before we left and said, "If things don't improve, how would you feel about us going off and doing our own thing?"

I think, to his complete surprise, I basically said, "Yep. Sign me up. I'm ready to go now."

It was a massive leap. If it wasn't for Carl, I'd probably still be an employee. What I love now is tackling problems. We get handed jobs other people aren't prepared to tackle. We can work with the customer and solve them rather than just saying, "Here's a price. Go for it."

Ca The big thing was taking responsibility for the whole process. If something goes wrong on our terms, it's my fault, and I'll sort it. That might sound like a nightmare to some people, but we just work harder not to make the mistakes.

No winging it

PPC Was starting the business frightening?

Ca My worst-case scenario was going back to being an employee. There's nothing wrong with that, but if Reaper went wrong, the worst thing that could happen was I'd go back to where I was two years earlier.

A lot of companies spend time trying to sell an idea. We'd rather ask, "What do you want?" If they say, "We just want that," fine. Let's work with that.



PPC The first 18 months went pretty well. Surely something went wrong?

Ca Last year went too smoothly. Then January arrived.

We had about £80,000 worth of purchase orders in December, with a lot of indoor work ready for January. Then nobody got back to us. We'd sold the jobs, we were ready to go, and we didn't work until 27 January.

Some people might think a month off sounds great. For two workaholics, it really sucked.

We used the time to improve our safe systems of work, RAMS, policies and processes. Now we're roof to roof again, and I sometimes think, "I wish we had that time."

Bird work changes how you look at the pipeline too.

One job might last four weeks. If a builder suddenly puts that project back by two months, it can leave a massive hole.

Head for heights

PPC What makes bird management such a good fit?

Ca For me it's the technical side. I'm very process-driven. You've got legislation, engineering, access, safety, animal welfare and customer expectations all tied together.

And, tongue in cheek, it's nice being all the way up there when annoying customers can be all the way down there. That is a joke, by the way.

PPC Working at height must make recruitment interesting.

Ca Number one question. Do you like heights?

We've had people interested in working with us. You explain all the crazy stuff we get into, they talk for an hour and then go, "But I'm scared of heights."

And you're thinking, what are we going to do? Chicken control? Kiwi? Dodo? Ground bird management?

I don't think anyone has ever thought, "Bird control is so good I will overcome my fear of heights for this job."

Even if you're comfortable, you can be in a cherry picker, and it starts rocking gently. The person on the ground says, "It wasn't moving that much." No, not down there it wasn't.

Building a flock, not an empire

PPC Reaper has a very personal brand. Was that deliberate?

Cr I think the family side has done us wonders. When we first started, it was "the Hoults brothers" this and "the Hoults brothers" that. We were probably known more for that than Reaper at first.

Ca People compliment our social media, and when I look at it, it's basically thousands of selfies of me and Craig. Here's us on a job. Here are our ugly mugs again.

But people know it's us. We're not trying to convince anyone we're a gigantic organisation.

Bigger isn't always better. We want to stay small enough that we can control the quality. We have fewer resources than bigger companies, and we're honest about that. It's about expectations.

PPC You're both pretty involved with BPCA too. Why?

Ca I was dragged into it. I didn't actively seek it. Years ago, Martin Cobbald [BPCA Executive Board member] from Dealey told me, "Sit down, shut up, listen and be an observer, and you'll get it."

Then you realise people are discussing the future of the industry. It gets addictive. You work on something, and then other people use what you've helped build.

PPC Finally, where do you want to take Reaper next?

Ca I don't think we need to be much bigger. We're working to the standard we want, and I'd rather keep the quality controlled, even if it takes us a little longer. For us it's about continuously striving to be better.

Cr Six years into pest management, I still absolutely love every bit of it. Hopefully we'll be here for a lot longer.



BPCA members can watch back this interview in full. (login required)
bpca.org.uk/cpd-videos





“We're trying to give people a proper foundation rather than just putting them straight out on the road.”

One Reaper job in Lowestoft involved a building used by the town's kittiwakes. Rather than designing the bird management work in isolation, Carl and Craig approached the local groups involved with the birds.

Working with the kittiwakes

They were really pleased that, as a pest industry, we actually wanted to let them have their say on what we were going to do.

There were a few options, including spiking and netting. They didn't want those, so we listened and took them off the table. We went with high-grade PVC slopes instead. It was much more expensive, but the welfare of the birds was the most important thing.

There was a local music festival afterwards, and the kittiwake group had its own stand. Our mum was walking past and heard them talking about how well the pest control had been done with the protected birds.

That little bit of education and talking to the right people meant people who could easily have been against the bird management were actually promoting the work we'd done.



VAN PARKING RULES FOR PEST PROFESSIONALS

Which?

Knowing where and when you're allowed to park your van while working is a must to avoid tickets. Learn more about the law on parking vans in residential areas with our guide.

For most pest control technicians, the van is effectively a mobile office, equipment store and workshop rolled into one.

Whether you're carrying ladders, bait boxes, proofing materials, application equipment or PPE, being able to park reasonably close to a customer's property can make a big difference to the job. Unfortunately, finding somewhere suitable isn't always straightforward, particularly on residential streets, in city centres or around blocks of flats.

Nobody wants to finish a difficult job only to discover a parking ticket tucked under the windscreen wiper. So, before you head to a new site, it's worth understanding the main parking rules for vans and commercial vehicles.

Parking vans in residential areas

In most cases, you can park a van outside a customer's property in much the same way as you would park a car. The important thing is to make sure you're parked legally, safely, and without creating an unnecessary obstruction.

Where possible, the Highway Code advises drivers to use off-street parking or marked parking bays.

If you do have to stop on the roadside, you should park close to the side of the road and avoid parking against the direction of traffic. Take particular care not to stop too close to a vehicle displaying a Blue Badge, as the occupant may need additional room to get in or out.

When leaving your vehicle, switch off the engine, headlights and fog lights, apply the handbrake and make sure the van is secure.

And before opening the door, check carefully for cyclists, motorcyclists and other road users. That's particularly worth remembering when you're concentrating on getting equipment out of the back of the van rather than what's approaching from behind.

Asking your customer about parking when the job is booked can save a lot of trouble. They may have a driveway, visitor permit or allocated parking space you can use, or know about restrictions that aren't immediately obvious when you arrive.

Where you shouldn't park

There are plenty of places where parking is restricted or prohibited.

Among other restrictions, you must not stop or park:

- On a motorway carriageway, emergency area or hard shoulder except in an emergency
- On a pedestrian crossing or its zigzag markings
- In a taxi bay
- On an urban clearway during its hours of operation, except where permitted to pick up or set down passengers
- In a tram or cycle lane during its period of operation
- On a cycle track
- In spaces reserved for particular users, unless you're entitled to use them
- On red lines unless signs specifically allow it.

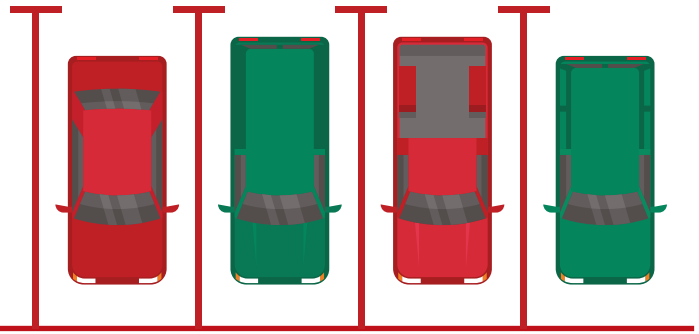
Double yellow lines mean waiting is prohibited at any time, although loading and unloading may sometimes still be permitted unless separate loading restrictions apply.

Single yellow lines operate during the times shown on nearby signs or on the signs at the entrance to a controlled parking zone.

You also need to think about whether the van itself could create a danger or obstruction. Parking close to a junction, across an entrance or



"Asking your customer about parking when the job is booked can save a lot of trouble."



somewhere that leaves other vehicles struggling to pass could cause problems even where there isn't an obvious yellow line telling you not to stop.

Pavement parking is prohibited in London and Scotland, subject to limited exceptions. Elsewhere, the Highway Code says you should not park partially or wholly on the pavement unless signs permit it. For pest professionals working in unfamiliar towns and cities, the simplest rule is not to rely on assumptions. Check the road markings and signs when you arrive.

Loading and unloading your equipment

Pest management vans can carry a fair amount of kit, so being able to stop near a property to unload can be important.

Loading and unloading may sometimes be allowed in places where ordinary parking is restricted. However, don't load or unload where yellow markings on the kerb and nearby signs show that loading restrictions are in force.

On red routes, specially marked and signposted bays show where and when loading is permitted.

Local authorities and private estates can also impose their own parking arrangements, so check the signs carefully.

Remember that loading means you're genuinely moving goods or equipment to or from the vehicle. It isn't simply a convenient way of describing leaving the van outside while you carry out a two-hour treatment.

If you regularly work at a commercial site, housing block or other location where access is difficult, it's worth discussing parking arrangements with the customer before the contract starts.

Parking your van at night

There are additional rules to consider if you leave your van on the road overnight.

You must not park on a road at night facing against the direction of the traffic flow unless you're in a recognised parking space.

All vehicles must also display parking lights when parked on a road or lay-by where the speed limit is greater than 30mph.

Vehicle weight matters too. Cars and goods vehicles not exceeding 2,500kg laden weight can

normally be parked without lights on a road with a speed limit of 30mph or less, provided they are at least 10 metres from a junction, close to the kerb and facing in the direction of traffic or are parked in a recognised parking place or lay-by.

Other vehicles and trailers, including goods vehicles over that weight, must not be left on a road at night without lights.

If you take your company van home, it's therefore worth knowing its maximum laden weight rather than assuming the same rules apply to every van.

Parking in fog

The Highway Code advises avoiding parking on the road in fog wherever possible. If you have no choice, leave your parking lights or sidelights on, so the vehicle is visible to other road users.

For technicians who can find themselves travelling early in the morning or late at night, particularly in rural areas, it's a small point worth remembering.

Parking on a hill

Take a few sensible precautions when parking on a hill. Park close to the kerb and apply the handbrake firmly.

If you're facing uphill, select a forward gear and turn the steering wheel away from the kerb. If you're facing downhill, select reverse gear and turn the wheel towards the kerb. For an automatic vehicle, use the 'park' setting.

It might sound basic, but a fully loaded pest control van is something you definitely don't want developing a mind of its own halfway through a callout.

Parking your van at home

If you keep your work van at home, tell your insurer and make sure your policy covers where you normally keep the vehicle.

If it's a company vehicle, check your employer's policy too.

Even if you have your own driveway, the property deeds or tenancy agreement may occasionally restrict commercial vehicles.

If you park on the road, check whether local permit schemes limit commercial vehicles. Some councils set restrictions based on factors such as a vehicle's height, length or weight.

There's also the neighbour test. Your parking might be perfectly legal but still annoying if a large van permanently blocks someone's light or makes it difficult for them to see when pulling off their drive. A little consideration can prevent a parking issue turning into a much bigger neighbourhood dispute.

What if you receive a parking ticket?

Coming back to the van and finding a penalty charge notice is never a great end to the working day. If you believe the ticket has been issued incorrectly, you have the right to challenge it.

Keep anything that might support your case, including photographs of signs and road markings, details of where the van was parked and evidence that you were legitimately loading or unloading if that is relevant.

The process for challenging a ticket depends on who issued it, so follow the instructions on the notice carefully and meet any deadlines.

Better still, spend an extra minute checking the restrictions before you start unloading. It could save considerably more time later.

BPCA MEMBER BENEFIT

Stand out with Which? Trusted Traders

BPCA members can access a preferential offer from Which? Trusted Traders, giving professional pest management businesses another way to demonstrate their credentials to potential customers.

Businesses applying to the scheme go through the Which? Trusted Traders assessment process and, once endorsed, can use the Which? Trusted Traders logo, build customer reviews and create a profile to help customers find their business. BPCA members can receive 50% off their monthly Which? Trusted Traders membership fee for the first six months. bpca.org.uk/which



RAGE AGAINST THE MACHINE (LEARNING)

Artificial intelligence can write your emails, tidy your reports, plan your marketing and... invent an entirely new species of rat.

Used well, AI can save pest professionals a serious amount of time and improve customer communication. Used badly, it can produce convincing nonsense, flatten your personality and turn dodgy technical information into something that looks worryingly authoritative.

PPC **Scott Johnstone** BPCA Technology Manager

AW **Alex Wade** Wade Environmental

VH **Vicki Hall** Lady Bug Pest Control

The good, the bad and the completely made-up

PPC This conversation started because BPCA's Outreach and Communications group got a tiny bit grumpy about some of the AI content we were seeing in pest management.

Professional Standards had a similar conversation in one of their meetings. So, nice easy opener. What's the worst use of AI you've ever seen?

AW Technical marketing posts. You'll see one saying "know your pest", and it looks convincing, but the information just isn't right.

I saw one with the brown rat, black rat, house mouse and then a fourth commensal rodent species that didn't exist. I traced it back to what looked like a misspelling on one website. The AI had effectively invented a rodent, but the pictures looked good enough that somebody who didn't know better would accept it.

VH The thing that gets me is how everything starts to look the same. Pest control posters, village fair posters, restaurant meal-of-the-day posters. You can almost always see the prompt behind them.

AW There's nothing wrong with using generative AI to do something you can't easily do yourself. The problem is blindly trusting what it gives you. Check it, and if something looks squiffy, ask somebody who knows.

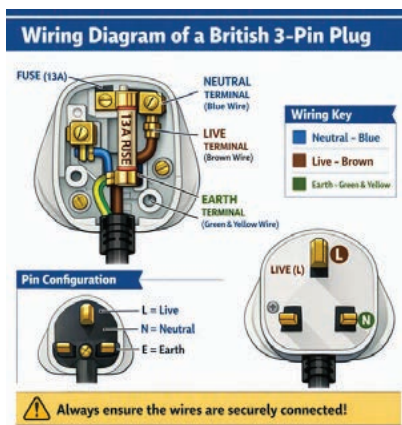
PPC There is definitely a "ChatGPT look". Pest images are a particular bugbear of mine too. AI can produce a convincing photograph of something that's half bed bug, half woodlouse and entirely fictional. If search results fill up with plausible-looking rubbish, identification gets harder.

VH We already get customers saying they've identified something themselves from Google Images. I'll still ask them to send me an actual photograph of the actual insect. I need to see it myself.

PPC And that gets harder when some of the reference images appearing in search results are AI-generated rubbish.

AW There was a similar thing online with baby peacocks. AI images spread because people hadn't really seen one and the pictures looked plausible. A baby peacock, in reality, just looks like a bloody bird.

Using AI when you know the answer



Alex demonstrated this by asking an AI image tool for a wiring diagram of a British three-pin plug. It confidently produced a diagram with connections and components in the wrong places.

PPC That gives us one of the biggest rules.



An online CPD quiz based on this feature is now available on the BPCA website. BPCA

Registered members and anyone with a MyBPCA account can take a CPD quiz at any time bpca.org.uk/find-cpd or sign up at bpca.org.uk/me

If you don't know roughly what the right answer should look like, AI is a dangerous way to fill the gap.

AW That sort of thing could actually hurt someone. With pest content, the consequences may be different, but the principle is the same.

PPC Vicki can use AI to improve a treatment report because she already knows how to write one. I couldn't ask it to produce one and assume it was right because I don't have her practical knowledge.

VH I use it a lot for reports, but it doesn't write the report for me. I know what I want to say, and it helps make it more fully bodied or professional. Then I check it before it goes to the client.

It saves me a hell of a lot of time, even with the checking.

Sometimes it uses one of Alex's big words, and I'm sitting there thinking, "What the hell does that mean?"

AW All words are made up at the end of the day. That's the joy of them.

There's another issue here around client confidentiality. If you're putting treatment information into an AI system, that might include somebody's name, address, the fact they've got pests and other information about them.

PPC If you're using it with client information, think about confidentiality and data protection. Don't paste names, addresses, treatment details or other identifiable information into an AI system unless your organisation has approved that use and you understand how the service handles the data.

AI is a signpost, not an expert

VH I've also used ChatGPT while planning a new business in an industry I didn't know much about. Without it, I genuinely wouldn't have known where to start.

But I've done the background research and spoken to real people in that industry. If ChatGPT tells me X, Y and Z, I go to an expert and ask whether X, Y and Z are actually true.

PPC I like that use. AI can help map out what you need to learn and who you need to speak to. The dangerous bit is mistaking signposting for expertise.

We've seen the same problem with references. I once received a technical article for PPC magazine that cited a Clive Boase article about wasps on waste sites, supposedly published in PPC in 2017.

It sounded plausible. Clive is a real consultant member and had written on a similar subject. But I edited PPC in 2017, and that article never existed. The reference and quote were made up.

AW I get that when I'm looking for research. Sometimes AI finds exactly the scientific paper I need. Other times it says, "Yes, you're absolutely right, here's the paper that proves it." Then you click through and discover it doesn't exist. It wants to please you.

Keeping your own voice

PPC I've written something to someone important, wondered whether the tone was right, put it through AI to calm it down and then thought, "That doesn't sound like me at all."

At some point you have to ask whether polishing away your personality makes the communication better.

AW AI writing has patterns. It likes certain words and structures. It can be grammatically fine but still feel slightly off.

PPC Which is awkward for copywriters. Rules of three, active voice, alliteration, subheadings and bullet lists used to be called good writing. Now half of them make people shout, "ChatGPT!"

VH AI has its place, the same as social media has good and bad uses. It has helped me a hell of a lot. People just need to check what it actually gives them.

AW And if you're going to use AI to put yourself on a pedestal of technical excellence, make sure you can back your BS up in the real world. It's no good saying "we are the best at insect identification" if the technician arriving on site can't tell the pests apart.

PPC My final test is simple. AI can make you a bit superhuman. It can help you work quicker and get better at something you already understand. Or it can make you less human, less approachable and worse at your job.

Before you publish the output, ask which one it's doing.

AI dos and don'ts for pest professionals

DO

- Use AI to speed up work you already understand
- Check every technical claim before it reaches a client or the public
- Follow references back to the original source and make sure they exist
- Use trusted technical guides, real photographs and experienced people for pest identification
- Check data protection rules and the AI provider's terms before entering client information
- Give clear instructions about audience, tone, purpose and boundaries
- Rewrite the output until it sounds like you
- Ask a real expert when the subject goes beyond your competence.

DON'T

- Use AI as a substitute for pest management knowledge or practical pest control training
- Assume a realistic-looking pest image is biologically accurate
- Copy technical advice into a report, article or social post without checking it
- Trust a citation just because it looks convincing
- Upload confidential or personally identifiable information without understanding how it will be processed
- Let generic AI copy flatten your company's personality
- Claim expertise in marketing that your team can't demonstrate on site
- Forget that responsibility for what you publish, recommend or send to a client is still yours.

Can AI identify your pest? PestOrNot.com

One of the trickier uses of AI is pest identification. A blurry phone photo, an unusual life stage or a suspicious dropping can all send a standard image recognition tool confidently off in the wrong direction.

PestOrNot is trying a slightly different approach. Users upload a photograph of a pest, droppings, damage, nests or other evidence. The tool checks image quality, uses AI to analyse what it can see, then validates the result against PestOrNot's structured pest and evidence database before providing supporting information and suggested next steps.

Importantly, it doesn't always try to force a species-level identification. Where the evidence isn't strong enough, it can return a broader or uncertain result instead.

PestOrNot says the tool currently achieves 94.7% accuracy on its internal test set, although it stresses this is a benchmark rather than a guarantee for every photograph.

It's not designed to replace a pest professional or entomologist. But as a first-pass identification tool, particularly for customers trying to work out whether they've got a pest problem, it's an interesting example of AI being used with a few sensible guardrails attached. Try it for free at pestornot.com

Spotted another AI tool pest professionals might find useful?

Send your suggestions to hello@bpca.org.uk.

MEET THE MEMBER

SMALL START, BIG SHIFT

From a three-person start-up to a team of almost 100, Nightshift has grown quickly since it was founded in 2013. PPC spoke to managing director Harry Somner and compliance lead, Charlie Coldwell about family connections, night work, training and the challenge of growing without losing what matters.

Nightshift started with three people: Harry and John Somner, and Nic Ashford. More than a decade later, the business has around 75 technicians and between 95 and 100 people across the company. The business works mainly in commercial pest management, with a strong presence in hospitality, restaurants, hotels, offices, stadiums and airports.

We caught up with Harry and Charlie to find out more about the people behind the business.

PPC Harry, how did you get into pest management?

HS I completed my Level 2 while working for Enviroguard in between college courses, then went full time as a foot technician covering Zone 1 in central London before heading to university. It was a great way to learn the job from the ground up. Nic started his journey in the industry at the same time, so it's great that we came back together years later to build Nightshift.

After university I spent time in the City working for an insurance broker. That gave me a strong grounding in business, client relationships and risk, which turned out to be ideal preparation for running a pest management company. Setting up Nightshift brought both sides of that experience together.

PPC And when did Nightshift begin?

HS We started in 2013 with three of us: myself, Nic, who is now our general manager, and John. Nic and John both brought strong industry experience, while I added a different skill set from my business and economics degree and my time working in the City.

Abi Richardson, now our business services director, joined about a year later. She'd also come from the City and became a huge part of the operational side of the business, particularly office administration and bid and tender writing.

PPC How has the company changed since those early days?

HS Quite a lot! We started in London and the South East, then gradually expanded as we won work and built up enough density to service new areas properly. We're now working as far north as Manchester and as far west as Bristol and Exeter.

A lot of that growth has come through tenders, but we've also had organic growth from existing customers. Some of our clients have been with us for more than 10 years, and as they've expanded their own operations, they've brought us with them.

PPC What do you think has been the key to that growth?

HS Relationships. Winning work is one thing, but there's no point if you're losing customers at the other end.

We've always focused on delivering exceptional standards and looking after our clients. And if something isn't right, we put it right quickly.

A lot of the people we work with are contacts I've known for more than 10 years.

We don't rely on a big sales team. Abi and I lead on large bids, and our client relationship team handles inbound sales enquiries. Either way, clients are dealing with people who know the business inside out. Some have been with us so long they've become friends.

PPC What sort of customers do you work with?

HS Around 90% of our work is commercial.

We cover luxury hotels and restaurants, offices, stadiums, superstores and airports, including two international airports. We also work in social housing and on government contracts.

One of the things I like about the business is the variety. It's a big draw for our technicians too; no two days are the same.

PPC Is hospitality a particularly important sector for you?

HS Yes. We do a lot of work in hospitality and bed bug management is a significant

part of that work. For luxury hotels, the reputational risk is huge, so our approach is largely preventative.

We deliver staff awareness training to hotel teams, led by Nic, and carry out proactive inspections. We use monitoring technology and our Labrador bed bug dogs, Bailey and Edward.

PPC Which areas of pest management does your team specialise in?

HS Inner-city rodent control is a real focus for us, and it's where a lot of our expertise lies. We have more than 40 foot technicians working across central London, so we can respond to issues almost immediately. In busy, high-density environments, that speed of response makes a real difference to our clients.

We know these sites inside out. Restaurants in busy transport hubs and older listed buildings are good examples.

Effective control comes from assessing the site as a whole, combining treatment with proofing and hygiene recommendations, and working closely with the client so responsibilities are clear on both sides. It's work we do every day, and our team is very experienced at it.

PPC Stating the obvious here, but the company is called Nightshift. Is that a key part of your service and is it unique in the industry?

HS It's a big part of what we do.

We wanted the name to reflect that we're a 24/7 operation, and we have a night team working every night. Most of our technicians work at least one night a week.

CC There are other companies that offer night work, but for us it's not an add-on. It's at the core of how we operate and how we schedule our teams.

PPC What are the advantages of working through the night?



Charlie Coldwell (left) and BPCA assessor, Kristian Nettleship.

HS For hospitality clients, it's a real advantage. We can attend after service has finished, assess hygiene and housekeeping standards, and carry out thorough inspections without any disruption to trade.

Offices are much the same. Clients don't want technicians working around a busy trading floor during the day, but at night we have full access to a quiet building.

CC There are operational benefits too.

Travelling across London is far quicker at night, so our technicians spend less time on the road and more time on site, which means a more efficient service.

PPC Charlie, you've come back into the industry and joined Nightshift. What does your role involve?

CC My role is broad, covering compliance, health and safety, auditing and technical support. I started in the industry as a technician in 2008 and later worked as a TAS auditor working with many BPCA members, before joining Nightshift in 2025 after a period working overseas.

Along with the compliance side, I still get involved in servicing and fieldwork, and I've been leading on our training and continuing professional development (CPD) programme.

PPC What does the training programme actually look like?

CC We've put together a five-week in-house induction programme for new starters.

It's designed to give people a solid baseline before they move on to their Level 2 qualification, and it includes the safe use of rodenticides.

Trainees shadow experienced technicians until they're fully competent and qualified. We're trying to give people a proper foundation rather than just putting them straight out on the road.

We've also had a lot of technicians progress onto the Technical Inspector course. We have a big emphasis on professional development. It's important for recruitment because new staff know that we'll invest in

them. Same goes for retention of current staff.

It's also key when working with clients, because they know that they're getting highly-trained, competent technicians working on their sites.

PPC How important is CPD to the business?

CC Very important. We have monthly team meetings and toolbox talks, and we keep our training records up to date. Everyone has already earned more than 20 CPD points this year, so there's a lot happening.

We also make good use of BPCA's online webinars. They're a valuable resource and an efficient way to keep everyone's knowledge current without taking the whole team off the road.

HS We won the Commitment to Training Award a couple of years ago, and that commitment hasn't changed. Training remains central to how we operate.

PPC Has growth brought challenges?

HS We've roughly doubled in size over the last two to three years, but we've grown in a planned, structured way. We've invested in our people, our training and our systems so the business is set up to support that growth.

Recruitment is an important part of that. We bring in a balance of experienced technicians and trainees, and our reputation helps a great deal.

We're well established, particularly in hospitality, and we're regularly invited to tender for work with prestigious establishments. That's a real draw for technicians, because people want to work on interesting, high-profile sites.

PPC Charlie, you've also been looking at the systems technicians use. Why?

CC We want to make things simpler.

I've been bringing our health and safety documentation together into our service system, so technicians have what they need in one place.

We're also moving quality assurance reporting into the same system. The aim is to streamline things.

Technicians are busy enough when they're out on site. They don't need to spend ages trying to find the right document or information.

PPC What's next for Nightshift?

HS Being part of the Tyro Group for nearly four years has been a real catalyst for us. It's given us the backing and resources to accelerate our growth, while keeping the identity and service culture that makes Nightshift what it is. In that time, Multipest and Pest Tech have been integrated into Nightshift.

We're on an exciting growth strategy and there could be further integrations in the future. But the main thing is continuing to deliver quality, look after our clients and support our technicians.

There's no point growing if you lose sight of those things.

PPC Finally, what advice would you give another pest management business looking to grow?

HS Understand your clients' needs.

Don't just apply a blanket service. A restaurant has very different operational requirements from an office or another type of commercial site.

You need to understand how the customer works and develop a service that fits.

Be agile. Be flexible. Build good relationships.

CC Keep on top of your training and CPD, no matter how experienced you are.

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Exams for Level 2, Certificated Field Biologist, Certificated Technical Inspector and Fumigation Unit 1.

Date	Location
17/11/2026	Leeds
20/11/2026	Milton Keynes
08/12/2026	Essex
11/12/2026	Stafford
22/12/2026	Derby
19/01/2027	Glasgow
29/01/2027	Milton Keynes
More exam dates to be released	

Event/ course name	From (£)	Date	Location
Hands-on practical pest management	250.00	14/11/2026	Milton Keynes
Yorkshire Training Forum	Free for everyone	18/11/2026	Leeds
Non-member open evening - Learn about BPCA membership	Free for everyone	20/11/2026	Online
KEYNOTE WEBINAR: Tender support – winning pest control contracts 🔒	Members only	25/11/2026	Online
Certificate in Bird Management	216.00	26/11/2026	Online
Starting out in pest control	132.00	01/12/2026	Online
KEYNOTE WEBINAR: Campaign for Responsible Rodenticide Use (CRRU-UK) CPD 🔒	Members only	02/12/2026	Online
Hands-on practical pest management	250.00	05/12/2026	Stafford
Level 2 Certificate in Pest Management (residential)	1,538.00	05-12/12/2026	Stafford
Level 2 Award in Pest Management (residential)	1,165.00	06-11/12/2026	Stafford
Essex Training Forum	Free for everyone	09/12/2026	Essex
DIGITAL FORUM 40: your online pest event	Free for everyone	16/12/2026	Online
GUEST WEBINAR: Droughts and floods – pest management in extreme weather 🔒	Members only	06/01/2027	Online
PPC Live: On Tour - Glasgow 🚚 NEW IN 2027!	Free for everyone	20/01/2027	Glasgow
Hands-on practical pest management	250.00	23/01/2027	Milton Keynes
Level 2 Award in Pest Management (residential)	1,165.00	24-29/01/2027	Milton Keynes
DIGITAL FORUM 41: your online pest event	Free for everyone	27/01/2027	Online
DEBATE WEBINAR: Ready to recruit? How to develop an amazing pest technician 🔒	Members only	03/02/2027	Online
Starting out in pest control	132.00	08/02/2027	Online
PPC Live: On Tour - Milton Keynes 🚚 NEW IN 2027!	Free for everyone	10/02/2027	Milton Keynes
Certificate in Bird Management	216.00	18/02/2027	BPCA, Derby
Non-member open evening - Learn about BPCA membership	Free for everyone	26/02/2027	Online
Hands-on practical pest management	250.00	27/02/2027	Stafford
Level 2 Certificate in Pest Management (residential)	1,538.00	27/02 - 06/03/2027	Stafford
Level 2 Award in Pest Management (residential)	1,165.00	28/02 - 05/03/2027	Stafford
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