

Pest Control

SOLUTIONS FOR BUSINESS



THE GREAT DEBATE

**LIVE
SEPT
2005**

IPM

**TVEDTEN
VS.
FEUER**

A QUESTEX PUBLICATION

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Give the public what it wants

Offer control without pesticides — profitably

By Stephen Tvedten • Contributor

There are probably between 30 million and 50 million insects. We have named about 1 million, and only about 1,000 are considered to be pests. The rest are beneficial insects — we literally cannot survive without them.

Pesticides cannot distinguish between pests and beneficial species. Before the advent of pesticides, we lost about 3 percent of our crops to insect pests. Now we apply more than 4 billion pounds of pesticides just in the United States, and we lose many more times more of our crops to insect pests now than before we began spraying.

It has been calculated that \$520 million in annual crop losses are caused just by the pesticidal reduction of natural pest enemies in the United States. We accidentally lose about 25,000 to 100,000 species of plants, insects and animals every year to man's "footprint." Still, after waging all-out chemical war against the 1,000 pests for more than 60 years, we have not controlled, much less eliminated, even one pest species.

In the December 1997 article of *Pest Control* ("The future of pest control," page 38), Orkin Pest Control's Glen Rollins addressed the topic of the industry's future. Rollins, at the time vice president of corporate development for the Atlanta-based firm, was a speaker at the National Pest Management Association's Academy '97 in Scottsdale, Ariz.

"The first challenge is safety concerns that exist in the market," he said in the article. "When I started in '79, there was a certain number of customers that had some satisfaction if you treated their homes with malathion in warm weather. They really didn't have the phobia they have nowadays, and I think we've all heard that and known that for a while."

continued on page 57

Pesticides are part of IPM

Responsible, judicious use is the key component

By Alan Feuer • Contributor

Although my role in this debate is in support of the use of pesticides as part of the integrated pest management (IPM) practice, I want to ensure that readers understand that this will not be a polar position statement that makes IPM the enemy. Actually, I will go so far as to support IPM and bring some questions to the table where pesticide application should be reconsidered.

Even with those thoughts in mind, however, I am a supporter for correct pesticide use. I believe pesticides play a critical role in the IPM process.

Whenever I choose to use pesticides, I try to make a comparison between pesticides and medications. I am not a big fan of medication because it always has some sort of negative side effect associated with its use.

There is always risk with the use of medication, and the same applies to pesticides. The reward must simply outweigh the risk.

PERSONAL PERSPECTIVE

A few years ago, I hurt my back. I am sure that this injury was a combination of chronic overuse, and perhaps even some acute trauma. Apparently, years of football, running, weightlifting, crappy work truck seats and 4,000 termite jobs took their toll on my poor lower back.

The symptoms of my affliction were pain (obviously) and numbness in my right buttocks and leg. Quite frankly, it was the worst pain I had ever been afflicted by. On a scale of one to 10, it was an 11. Interestingly enough, though, the pain really did not seem to be where the actual problem existed.

Through advanced examination, it was determined that

I had herniated my L5 disk. The herniation of the disk was pressing upon my sciatic nerve, which was causing the pain and numbness.

On the advice of my doctor and from my own experience as an athlete, I was exercising daily, stretching and watching my posture. I also was drinking large amounts of water to hydrate my disks and regularly applying ice to my lumbar region. In my case, sitting was an excruciating experience, and I would rather walk three miles than ride in a car.

Although the physical therapy and lifestyle modifications allowed me to suffer through my problem, I was, for lack of a better expression, "crazy" from the pain and something had to be done. Back to the doctor I went.

Because my lifestyle modifications and curative therapy were not working, medication was suggested. In this case, the doctor chose advanced medicine in the form of a cortisone injection right into the offending disk. The goal was to stop the inflammation at the joint, which had failed to heal because of the inflammation.

I was in a vicious circle: The inflammation would not let the joint heal, and the injury continued the inflammation.

After two rounds of cortisone, and about five more weeks of clean living and therapy, I was down to a pain level of only one. Heck, at 37 years old, getting out of bed is a pain level of one. This I could live with.

I hope that most of you can connect the comparisons that can be made from this case as it pertains to pest management.

The bottom line is that in this case, there would be no cure without the use of medication.

In many pest management cases,

we cannot readily solve pest issues without the use of pesticides.

I will admit that my personal feeling is that our society is too quick to prescribe both pesticides and medication for maladies that might be avoided or corrected through other sensible steps. We also must consider that, from a safety/health perspective and even from an economic standpoint, pesticides and medicines can be lifesavers.



It's my opinion that pesticides are as logical a choice for responsible pest management as medicines are for responsible health care. In neither case should chemistry be the first choice to solve the problem.

THE PESTICIDE CHOICE

It's my opinion that pesticides are as logical a choice for responsible pest management as medicines are for responsible health care. In neither case should chemistry be the first choice to solve the problem.

In our position as pest professionals, we have the duty and obligation to make prescription for safe and sane pesticide applications. As with medicine, our "patients" come to us when they believe they have exhausted all other means to solve their dilemma. Simply put, there are many pest maladies that cannot be sensibly resolved without the proper use of pesticides.

How do we provide control of subterranean termites without the use of pesticides? Sure, if we build the home a certain way, we can avoid termites, but many homes are built in a way that termiticide applications are the only resolution.

I do not see a reasonable remedy to fleas, German cockroaches or many ant infestations without the use of pesticides. I am aware that there are other integrated processes that can be employed to resolve these pest issues, but the practicality of vacuuming, steaming, trapping and other non-chemical treatments is just not there.

The cost is excessive, and the effort for the afflicted party is considerable. Responsible pesticide applications will correct the problem quickly, effectively and affordably so that the victims of these pests can get back on with their lives.

How about our food supply? As a structural pest professional, I can only speak from the point of view as a consumer, as I have no background in pest management in agriculture. It seems to me that we have a greater percentage of our food mak-

ing its way to market since the advent of pesticide use in several phases of food production, handling, shipping, processing and storing. Didn't IPM originate with agriculture? Was it not a sensible process to save money and effort if pesticide applications were not needed at that particular time and place?

What I want to know is, when did pesticides become *taboo* within the world of IPM? We must continue to let the world know that yes, we will utilize the full IPM process, but no, it does not mean that we will not use pesticides when they are the logical choice.

continued on next page

THE GREAT DEBATE

from previous page

Because I like to look at both sides to any issue, I might pose this question: When is it questionable to make a pesticide application? We are asked, requested or required to make applications every day that we know are not necessary.

I can think of three issues that torment me on a regular basis. I will defend pesticide use in one case and I will question the establishment on the others. Where does this leave us as professionals?

1. There are no pests present.

Maybe we have done such a good job with preventative treatments that pests are no longer an issue.

Should we stop making preventative applications to areas we know are likely to allow pest intrusion in the future? What about the financial considerations

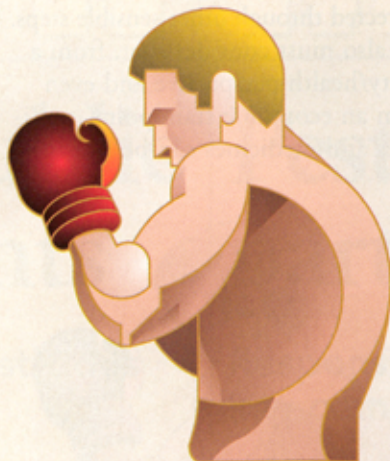
of not making preventative applications? Who is to lose their job because there are no more pests? Wasn't that the goal in the first place?

There are many of you who might be on the other side of this issue thinking, "There are other IPM-related things that can be accomplished at that account that don't include application of pesticides."

I agree, fully support and even demand efforts such as exclusion, tree trimming, mulch removal, terrain modification, monitoring, trapping, inspecting and reporting. The fact is, our clients do not want to have an influx of new pests into their environment, and a reasonable preventative application just seems sound.

2. Sanitation, exclusion and other cultural modification could be taken to remedy the problem. This is something we are becoming better at every year. In essence, it comes down to communication with the consumers

of our service. We as an industry have come a long way in the last 10 years in sharing ideas and tactfully and effectively communicating with our clientele. We have learned that our



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role is not merely to be the purveyors of poison, but rather true pest management professionals.

Trade publications and associations, as well as national educational seminars, the Internet, manufacturers and suppliers have brought us together to be the true professional industry that we always had the potential to be. We know how to modify environments, and we are really getting good at explaining this process to our clients.

We still find ourselves at odds with some of our clients when we professionally explain that their pest problem can be resolved without the use of pesticides. Why is this? Is it because non-chemical remedies are more expensive, at least in the short term? Is it because the consumer thought that we could apply our "magic dust" to the problem and it would go away? Maybe it is because the consumers themselves have to be involved in the

fix, and they really just wanted to hand their problem to us.

I don't have any easy-to-digest suggestions in this realm. I hope that we as an industry continue to identify, communicate and provide service for environmental modification as a professional pest management solution.

I do know that if we all make this a practice, consumers will see that our entire industry is serious about non-pesticide-based pest management.

3. There is a mandate that for some reason requires pesticide application. This issue is the most upsetting to me. There is nothing more frustrating than being required to

make pesticide application without any recognition that the IPM process is available. One can find language in many bid parameters that require the "spraying" of pesticides at a certain

interval of time.

Also, anyone who knows me fairly well will tell you that I am disappointed in the statement "treatment recommended" on the NPMA-33 (formerly NPCA-1) form. Wouldn't the word or term "action recommended" or "take appropriate action for the management of pests" be so much better here? I hope that all of you include provisions or amendments to such shortsighted statements that allow you more sensible pest management options.

I do *not* think that IPM should exclude pesticide applications. I'm not sure how anyone lost sight of this. I do hope we can continue to communicate and practice the true meaning of the IPM process in every account that we service. **PC**

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DATA TELLS THE STORY

Rollins went on to say that according to a University of Kentucky study, 66 percent of Americans polled believed that pesticides caused cancer. For both their home and work environments, 77 percent were concerned about pesticides.

In addition, 85 percent wanted pesticides with no odor and 62 percent preferred only outdoor treatments. A whopping 83 percent of those polled would pay extra for a pest management professional (PMP) to use fewer pesticides in the account. In fact, 75 percent of that group would pay between 10 percent and 25 percent more for the same results.

Although 65 percent of Americans confessed to having a pest problem in a Gallup survey, Rollins reported, only about 10 percent of that group actually called a professional pest management firm. Of those surveyed, 54 percent believed pesticides that professionals used were harmful, and 64 percent said they would wait until a problem was severe before calling a professional. The

overriding reasons included the belief that pesticides may jeopardize the safety of their children or pets, and the belief that pesticides professionals use in treatments were too strong.

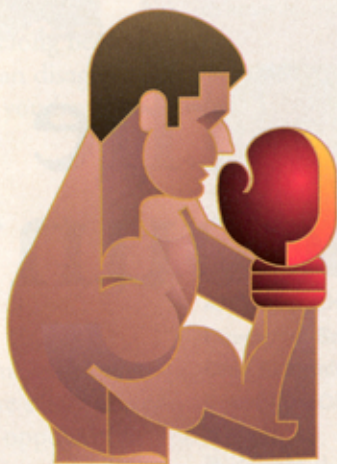
In 1997, Rollins concluded that he believed "our market could be a lot bigger than it is right now." Eight years later, I'd like to note that public perception of pesticides is even worse today. Obviously, there is greater potential profit today for those of you who want to use safer alternatives.

PERSONAL PERSPECTIVE

My personal transition from "spray

jockey" 35 years ago to an internationally recognized authority on *intelligent* pest management (IPM) today began when I lost family members and became seriously ill myself. I realized my use of pesticides had caused this. I had to detoxify, get well and then either find safer alternatives or leave the pest control business.

This is why I chose, and continue to choose, never to use any volatile regis-



If I asked you to build a home and only allowed you to use one kind of tool — all the hammers or all the saws or all the screwdrivers — you would think I was crazy. But that is what pest control has been basically since World War II and the advent of pesticides.

tered pesticides. First of all, I do not want to re-injure or harm myself, or anyone else. Secondly, I get far better control with my chosen alternatives. I have had schools hire me saying, "We know our pest problems will increase, but we do not want to poison our children." After a few weeks, they call me and ask why they no longer have any pest problems.

I have developed, researched and/or field-tested more than 2,000 safe (and far more effective) alternatives to pesticides. If I asked you to build a home and only allowed you to use one kind of tool — all the hammers or all the

saws or all the screwdrivers — you would think I was crazy. But that is what pest control has been basically since World War II and the advent of pesticides. When one pesticide no longer works, you continue to choose another pesticide, pesticide combination or application frequency. Still, you're using the same type of "tool."

When I started in pest control, we routinely used chemicals like DDT, chlordane, heptachlor and aldrin to such a degree that now it is considered "normal" for every living organism to contain residues of these now-banned toxins. If you think you are the exception, go have a blood test done.

There have been thousands of chemical trespass/injury lawsuits caused by even the labeled applications of these and other volatile pesticides. Even if you win, you still lose a great deal of money. There have been thousands of books and articles on the dangers of pesticides, and it is against federal law to say even

the labeled use of pesticides is "safe." There are thousands of potential customers in your area who want to hire a professional who does not use dangerous pesticides. Why continue to go against public opinion?

If you choose to use only safe and far more effective

pest control alternatives, you will find that there is no way your customers can or will sue you for chemical injury/trespass, and they will gladly sign any release protecting you from subsequent damage or infestation to hire you as a true IPM professional. They will be greatly pleased with the true IPM control you achieve. You will also find as I already have: They will gladly pay you more to truly protect their families and properties. **PC**

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