Top Five Ways to Protect Your Facility from Fall Pests

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Fall is around the corner, which means weather will begin to cool, and the outdoors will become less hospitable for humans and animals alike. As you begin to welcome the start of autumn, keep an eye out for pests that may be aiming to make your facility their home for the next several months.

Pests like flies, ants, birds and rodents are common pests that are likely to find shelter in your facility this fall. Due to prolonged warm temperatures this year that led to optimal breeding conditions, their population numbers have exploded, making it that much more important to proactively protect your facility from an infestation. Here are some tips on implementing preventive measures:

1.) Take Inventory of Your Facility’s Hot Spots

In food processing environments, pests are unwanted visitors year-round. It’s important to understand which areas in your facility are most attractive to pests, as well as ways you can discourage pest activity in those vulnerable spaces. Once you have pinpointed your facility’s hot spots, you can target your pest control tactics to the areas that count most.

2.) Follow Exclusion Tactics to Keep Pests Out

Mice can squeeze through holes the size of a dime, while rats can enter buildings through holes the size of a quarter. So imagine the other pests that use tiny cracks and crevices to gain access to your facility! Consider installing weather stripping and door sweeps to prevent pests from entering through cracks found under doors and near windows. Also, ensure that all openings are closed with weather-resistant sealant to keep pests in their place — outside.

3.) Implement a Strict Sanitation & Facility Maintenance Regimen

Sanitation and facility maintenance should be core elements of your Integrated Pest Management (IPM) program. IPM focuses on proactive steps you can take to help reduce the food, water and shelter sources pests need to survive. Indoors, encourage your staff to immediately clean all food and drink spills, in addition to taking the trash out regularly. Likewise, all outdoor waste receptacles should be tightly closed and regularly cleaned. Keep all dumpsters as far away from the facility as possible and follow a regular rotation schedule. Lastly, remove all excess moisture and standing water sources near HVAC units, dumpsters and ice machines, as they are common attractants for pests like rodents and birds.

4.) Train Your Employees on Proper IPM Procedures

As facility manager, it is impossible to fully dedicate yourself to protecting your property from pest infestations when you have other tasks to perform — your employees should become involved and lend their eyes and ears to the pest management cause, too. To ensure that everyone understands and is on the same page with the IPM procedures followed at your facility, conduct an IPM training session for your employees. Most reputable providers offer free onsite staff education. Many can even provide helpful tip sheets or other employee communication to remind everyone of their role in pest management. By holding IPM training, you will equip employees with the information they need to look for signs of a pest infestation, report pest sightings and understand the daily role they play in your facility's pest management program.

5.) Contact a Pest Professional

At the first signs of pest activity in your facility, call your pest management professional right away. A licensed, trained pest management professional can inspect your facility and create a customized treatment program for your pest problem, which will help you to reach a solution more efficiently. Your pest management professional can also help you stay abreast of the constantly changing requirements for the pest control portion of food and safety audits.

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