

Autumnal pests – what to expect and how to combat them

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Insight from John Stewart, technical training manager at Pelsis Group

As summer draws to a close and we approach autumn, temperatures can begin to fluctuate more, and the rain becomes heavier and more common. This change in weather can lead to a change in the pests we begin to see, which is important to prepare for if you're looking to prevent any infestations damaging business performance.

In this article, we will look at the most common autumn pests and offer advice on how you can deal with them.

Rodents

During cold snaps, mice and rats are forced inside to seek shelter and food, in distribution centres storing and shipping food and pharmaceuticals. It is of the upmost importance to have regular pest control inspections to check for the presence of infestation.

Products not packed in rodent proof containers should be stored high up to prevent damage, slow moving stock should also be stored high up in the racking to prevent rodents nesting in pallets. Mice have been observed living in the mastic expansion joints in the floor next to pallets of pet food, cereals and flour.

In a more general context, exclusion is the best form of prevention and regular maintenance of the building fabrication will help to prevent pest ingress.

Good door management is important. Educating staff and contractors to close doors when not in use is

important to prevent the casual intrusion of rodents running in through open doors.

Discouraging staff from leaving foodstuffs such as biscuits in their desk drawers is also advisable, as mice will set up home in the office close to a food source, usually nesting under the floor electrical socket boxes.

Wasps

Wasps can be a real nuisance during the autumn especially around September.

At this point, wasps no longer hunt insects to feed the larvae within the nest, instead they feed on high sugar foodstuffs and fallen fruit. The fruit begins to ferment with the sugars turning to ethanol and the wasps that feed on this are essentially drunk, which is why they become aggressive.

Moving waste compactors and bins away from the building is advisable to prevent pest attraction.

Cleaning food residues from the insides of the bins and fluids leaking from the compactor will also help to deter wasps.

Importantly for those working in a warehouse setting, wasps are highly attracted to bright yellow high visibility clothing and anyone operating a forklift truck outside will vouch for this.

Sighting wasp traps around the site will help to prevent foraging pests from entering the premises, and reaching the building where staff could potentially be stung.

While for those who are office-based, having insect screens fitted to windows used for ventilation will also help to prevent wasps and other flying insects from entering the building.

Cluster flies

Distribution centres situated in semi-rural locations can have issues with cluster flies.

These flies are parasites of earthworms, the females lay eggs in soil and after hatching the larvae bore holes and feed on earthworms. The larvae develops inside the earthworm and when it is near death or dead the cluster fly larvae leaves to pupate in the soil.

The adult cluster fly will then emerge from the soil and seek shelter in buildings during the autumn months, sometimes in their thousands.

Insect light traps situated internally around the premises will help to reduce the numbers of these pests. In addition, placing fly screens on office windows and chemical treatments are required to control these invading flies.

Carpet beetles and clothes moths

With the return of cooler months, many people will be bringing out their warm jumpers and cardigans. These can sometimes have carpet beetle larvae on them that have spent the summer eating materials such as woollens, felts and cashmere hidden away in storage.

These may be brought in by accident into facilities from people's homes, which can start an infestation along with other textile pests such as the clothes moth.

Additionally, the adult females will be seeking suitable places to lay their eggs, these can be cracks and crevices indoors or even in birds' nests. Both of these can result in a new infestation of carpet beetles and clothes moths.

Educating staff about these dangers is an important tool in preventing an infestation.

Following the above guidance can help prevent infestations of pests mentioned, and having permanent monitors in key locations will help to control activity quickly and detect pest activity that would normally go undetected.