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No Reservations

No Reservations **is a monthly newsletter published by RQA Inc. for the restaurant industry.**

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Unwanted Guests: Mice & Rats

Restaurants and food service facilities welcome all guests, well not all guests. Sometimes, the uninvited show up in the form of mice and rats. Rodents are the type of guests that do not like to leave. Sometimes they like it there so much they decide to stay and start a family. This is definitely not a welcomed thought.

Restaurants are constructed to "build-out" pests, particularly insects and rodents. This article is going to focus on the control of mice and rats. Rodent control starts on the exterior of the facility with self-closing and tight fitting doors, screened windows & vents, and continues in the interior of the facility by the sealing all holes & gaps (where the floor meets the wall, around pipes leading into the wall, and between equipment and the floor/wall). Another control measure is sanitation. Sanitation reduces potential food sources and harborage zones. Maintaining a strict sanitation program for the exterior and the interior of the facility will greatly reduce the entry and breeding of pests.

Restaurants and food service facilities "build-out" pests because they are known carriers of disease (e.g., Salmonella, Typhus, Rat-bite fever, lymphocytic choriomeningitis (LCMV), Leptospirosis, Lyme disease, Hanta virus, plague, pox, etc.). The Centers for Disease Control (CDC) state that worldwide, rats and mice spread over 35 diseases. These diseases can be spread to humans directly, through handling of rodents, through contact with rodent feces, urine, or saliva, or through rodent bites. Diseases carried by rodents can also be spread to humans indirectly, through ticks, mites or fleas that have fed on an infected rodent.

The main focus for the control of rodents is directed at mice and rats (Norway & Roof). As stated above, the first step to prevent the entry of rodents is to build them out. How to build out the rodent is to know their physical anatomy. Rodents, unlike humans, do not have collarbones. Therefore, the widest part of their physical anatomy is the crown of their skull. If the head fits in the hole/gap then entry is achieved. The average diameter of a mouse skull is a quarter inch, and the average diameter of a rat skull is a half inch. That said, it is the responsibility of the restaurant/ food service facility to eliminate any holes or gaps that are larger than a quarter inch to prevent the entry of rodents. The tighter the fit the better. Remember, rodents have the ability to gnaw. They can make a small hole just large enough for entry.

Other areas to focus on when controlling rodents is to know their tendencies, habits, reproductive & life cycles, and dietary needs. In the next pane is a breakdown of the above mentioned needs for the House Mouse, Norway Rat and the Roof Rat.

Once this is understood it becomes easier to control the entry of mice and rats. If and when rodents gain entry into your facility you want to eliminate them as quickly as possible. It is strongly suggested that restaurant and food service facilities hire a licensed and insured pest control professional to eliminate rodents from your facility. These trained individuals will use multiple strategies to remove the rodents from your facility in a safe manner. There are several strategies the restaurant can follow as well. Store all food items at least six inches above the floor and away from the walls. Keep bulk ingredients in tight fitting containers. Reduce or eliminate clutter. Repair leaking water lines and plumbing fixtures. Lastly, sanitation, sanitation, and sanitation.

Sources: www.cdc.gov/rodents, www.orkin.com, www.victorpest.com

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In conclusion, to prevent and control rodents, restaurants and food service facilities must be built and maintained in sound condition to prevent entry, understand the targeted pest, provide strict sanitation programs, develop, train, and practice sound food storage procedures, and use safe and approved methods to eliminate the unwanted guests (of course we mean rodents).

	House Mouse	Norway Rat	Roof Rat
Color	Dusty Gray	Grayish brown, can vary	Black to brownish gray
Weight	1/2-1 ounce	10-16 ounces	6-12 ounces
Length	2.5-4 inches	7-10 inches	6-8 inches
Tail Length	As long as body	6-8 inches	7-10 inches
Body	Small head & slender body	Heavy & thick, blunt nose	Thin, slender, pointed nose
Lifespan	1-2 years	5-12 months	5-18 months
Daily Water	From food	1-2 ounces	1 ounce
Food	Cereal, grains, meats, seeds	Cereal, grains, seeds, cockroaches, fruits, shrimp	Fruits, berries, meats, seeds, vegetables, eggs
Nest Location	Corners, cluttered areas, voids	Burrows in soil, sewers, basements	Attics, false ceilings, upper portions of buildings, palm trees
Home Range	6-30 feet from nest	25-100 feet from nest	Up to 300 feet from nest

Preschool, Northwest , OR. November 2014

A preschool in northwestern Oregon has shut down after three of its students contracted E. coli infections this fall.

The Public Health Division of Clackamas County this weekend requested that children who attend the preschool in OR, stay home from schools, daycares and water-related activities and that they not participate in events where food is shared. Three of the school's students fell ill with E. coli infections in September and October, according to the agency.

The school shut down in response to the health inquiry to prevent the possible spread of infection.

Two of the infected students have been hospitalized while one is known to have recovered, the county public health agency said, according to the Oregonian.

While two of the students are known to have contracted the same type of E. coli infection, E. coli O157:H7, a particularly dangerous form of the bacteria, the health department is awaiting test results to determine which type of E. coli infection the third student has.

The Clackamas County Public Health Division has requested stool samples from all of the preschool students, who range in age from infant through six years old. The agency said in a statement that it would collect samples and results are expected within a week of testing.

"We urge parents to continue to be vigilant over the next few weeks and report any illness symptoms promptly," wrote the Cackamas County Public Health Division in a letter to parents. "Please also seek medical attention if any symptoms appear."

Symptoms of E. coli infection include nausea, vomiting, stomach cramps, loose stool and bloody diarrhea.

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Universities, Atlanta, GA. & Charlottesville, VA. November 2014

Norovirus was the pathogen responsible for sickening students at both universities last week, health department officials have revealed.

At least 89 students at the university in Atlanta, Georgia sought care for gastrointestinal illness at the health care center or the University Hospital between Nov. 12 and Nov. 14, according to a letter to the school community from the assistant vice president and executive director of University Student Health and Counseling Services. At the university in Charlottesville, 18 students were hospitalized and many more were sickened with symptoms of nausea and vomiting last weekend, reported the Daily Progress.

After testing samples from those sickened, the health officials investigating each outbreak determined they were caused by Norovirus. Environmental samples collected from both campuses have not yet revealed the source of contamination in either case.

"All left over food served in the market on Tuesday, November 11 has been isolated and will now be tested for Norovirus," wrote the assistant vice president and executive director of University Student Health and Counseling Services at the Atlanta university in his Nov. 15 letter.

Norovirus outbreaks are most common between November and April, when over 80 percent of them occur. The virus is spread more easily where people are living in close quarters and sharing meals, such as on cruise ships, in day care centers or at universities.

The assistant vice president and executive director of University Student Health and Counseling Services from the Atlanta university said the school had sanitized all of its dining facilities Saturday.

He wrote, "While most of us are not fond of the smell of chlorine, when you smell it on the campus over the next few days, it is a good thing."

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