

Choosing a Pest Control Company: IPM is the Key

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What is “IPM” and why choose a company that practices it?

IPM stands for Integrated Pest Management, a common-sense pest management strategy that focuses on long-term solutions to pest problems with minimum impact on human health and the environment.

A company that practices IPM does not rely on pesticides as the only method to respond to a pest problem; instead it uses pesticides as part of an integrated strategy that includes other tactics. If pesticides are needed, a company that practices IPM uses the least hazardous procedures and products.

IPM solutions are based on understanding pest biology and behavior. Key concepts are:

- Long-term, sustainable solutions
- Prevention and avoidance through pest barriers such as window screens, sealed cracks, door sweeps, and good sanitation
- Monitoring and identification of pests and conditions that attract pests
- Treatment using a combination of mechanical (traps), physical (removal), and when necessary, chemical methods

A company that practices IPM can help reduce long-term costs by dealing with the causes of the problem, not just the symptoms. Low-risk pesticides are used only when needed, which reduces environmental and health impacts.



Photo: Lynn Ketchum, © Oregon State University

What to ask a pest control company

When choosing a company, make sure it:

- Is licensed with the Oregon Department of Agriculture
- Provides a written report of findings, proposed treatment, and costs
- Provides a written guarantee of service
- Provides a list of references

To choose a company that practices IPM, ask these questions: What training, certification, and qualifications does the technician have? What steps will the technician take to assess and control the pest problem?



A good IPM specialist will:

- Inspect the premises
- Identify the pest
- Explain what condition or conditions most likely caused the pest problem
- Tell you the extent of any pest damage
- Develop and discuss corrective actions
- Implement appropriate corrections
- Explain ways to prevent further pest outbreaks
- Schedule a follow-up visit to evaluate the success of corrective actions

Red flags!

Be wary of these tactics:

- High pressure to sign a contract without time to consider all options
- No written contract or written guarantee
- Offers of regularly scheduled calendar spraying. This is **not** IPM.

When practicing IPM, the company identifies conditions that cause the pest problem, helps eliminate the conditions, and may offer regularly scheduled monitoring to determine if treatment is needed.

Additional resources

- The National Pesticide Information Center at Oregon State University (<http://npic.orst.edu/pestprof.html>) is a source of unbiased information on pesticides and includes a comprehensive section on Pest Control.
- The Oregon Pest Control Association's pledge to environmental stewardship (<http://www.opca.org/page-1796620>).
- QualityPro (<http://www.npmaqualitypro.org/>) is an industry program designed to increase professionalism of the industry through self-regulation.
- Green Shield Certified (<http://www.greenshield-certified.org/>) is an independent, nonprofit certification program that promotes practitioner use of effective, prevention-based pest control while minimizing use of pesticides.

A note on wood-infesting termites in Oregon

Presence of dampwood termites in the home is most often the result of moisture problems in the structure.

Correction of underlying conditions, especially moisture, that encourage these pests must be a key component of an IPM program.

Subterranean termites are a serious structural pest in our region. In addition to conducting a careful inspection and dealing with underlying conditions, the IPM approach to managing termites includes discussion of various pesticide treatment options, such as chemical barriers and baits.

Bait stations are an alternative to termiticides and can be effective in controlling termites as part of an IPM program. For more information, search for "termites" in the Pacific Northwest Insect Management Handbook at <http://insect.pnwhandbooks.org>.

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