

## **A White Paper Series from the National Pest Management Association Integrated Pest Management (IPM): An Industry Trend with Staying Power**

Trends can be powerful. Consider the effect of remote offices, web conferencing and outsourcing in the business world. These ideas burst on the scene and became a "must" in business. Now, these trends are no longer considered to reflect "forward-thinking," but rather are reflected upon as "passé".

In many ways, these business practices perfectly portray the lifecycle of a trend. They emerge to encourage vital industry dialogue, raise important questions and compel reflection upon professional techniques. Yet, after the original flurry of discussion, trends tend to quietly fade away without making a lasting impact.

However, Integrated Pest Management, commonly referred to as IPM, is a trend that has demonstrated true "staying power" within the pest management industry. IPM, as defined by the National Pest Management Association (NPMA) is a process involving common sense and sound solutions for treating and controlling pests. The focus is upon finding the *best treatment* for a pest problem, and not merely the simplest. Pest professionals never employ a "one size fits all" method in IPM, but rather, utilize a three-part practice: 1) inspection, 2) identification and 3) treatment by a pest professional.† Treatment options in IPM can vary from sealing cracks to removing food and water sources to employing pest products, when necessary.

From homes to schools to public property, IPM is proving to be more than a passing phase – it is an issue gaining significant political and public attention. Various states, cities and townships, across the nation, have legislated on IPM with a focus upon public works projects.

Yet, for an issue that is finding public traction, there is little consensus about the definition of IPM. In fact, a 2007 national survey conducted by Harris Interactive on behalf of the National Pest Management Association, found that 67% of all respondents had little to no knowledge of IPM. This lack of understanding has considerable consequences for consumers, particularly as IPM permeates essential conversations about how to best protect both public health and property from the threats posed by pests.

### **Defining IPM in an Accurate and Meaningful Way**

Much of the confusion and controversy surrounding IPM comes from the assortment of definitions offered for it. Type "Integrated Pest Management" into Google and a plethora of information appears – some of the content is good, some is not; much is incomplete. Although many would argue "the more information, the better," the abundance of information on IPM simply tends to muddle the issue and confound consumers.

The top priority in integrated pest management is the protection of public health and property. To properly implement an IPM program, consumers *must* have the best information and a variety of pest management options available to them. IPM programs should be designed within the comprehensive and holistic definition provided above – a definition, which provides consumers with a multitude of proactive and reactive measures to protect their families and homes from the risks associated with pest infestations.

Further, the "integrated" in Integrated Pest Management does not merely describe the three-part practice of inspection, identification and treatment. It reflects the joint commitment of consumers and pest professionals in making homes, schools, businesses and public property pest-free environments. Cooperation is critical because it sustains the individualized approach of IPM. A multi-party effort to implement IPM encourages a stronger commitment to assessing each

situation uniquely and developing a comprehensive cure to each pest problem. Treatments can and should include daily preventative measures (*disposing of garbage in a timely manner*), long-term preventative measures (*caulking cracks and gaps in and around your property to keep pests from invading*) and reactive measure (*applying pest products*). IPM is most effective when there is a true partnership between customers and pest professionals.

### **Why the Public Should Know about Integrated Pest Management**

The fact remains \_ pests, such as insects and rodents, can have harmful effects upon public health and property. Although IPM programs evolved out of concern regarding the use of pest control products, it is rare that the dangers stemming from pests and rodents are fully addressed. Common pests that are routinely found in homes include cockroaches, rodents and ants. It is unsettling to think of families sharing their homes with these pests because of the serious risks they pose. Below is a more detailed overview of the threats these pests can cause to the well-being of families and their homes.

#### *Cockroaches*



The National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences (NIEHS) currently reports that one-in-five children in the United States has severe sensitivities to cockroach allergens, which increase the severity of asthma symptoms. These allergens are most commonly introduced through cockroach saliva, droppings and the decomposing bodies of these pests. Moreover, cockroaches can carry bacteria such as E coli and salmonella on their bodies, which can contaminate food, cooking equipment and food surfaces.

#### *Rodents*



Rodents can enter homes through almost any opening or crack. Once inside, rodents can cause severe damage as they are able to chew through wallboards, cardboard, wood and plaster. Notably, rodents can chew through electrical wiring, increasing the potential risk of fire. Homeowners must inspect for rodent droppings, especially in undisturbed areas such as kitchen pantries, under baseboards and along walls. Rodent droppings most often cause allergic reactions but can also cause disease, including the potentially deadly Hantavirus.

## *Ants*



Ants are social insects. Therefore, spotting one ant unfortunately signifies that the troops may be close behind. Ants are not simply unsightly – they can also be dangerous contaminants to food. This demands that homeowners be proactive in preventing and treating ants in the building. Considering that families often have 1-2 meals at home in a given day, food contamination is an issue that homeowners must contend with when discussing family health and home safety.

Clearly, the risks posed by the presence of pests are significant and demand action. Integrated pest management has truly grown out of consumers' realization of the active role that they can play in proper pest management. Even in briefly examining the threats posed by cockroaches, rodents and ants, it is clear that prevention can be as important to pest management as treatment, thus the emphasis placed upon developing the consumer/pest professional partnership.

Here are just a few pest prevention techniques, which consumers can employ within a properly implemented IPM program.

- Keep food sealed and stored properly, particularly in kitchens and pantries.
- Clean high-volume areas, such as kitchens, daily where crumbs and trash are more likely to build up.
- Dispose of garbage regularly and store in sealed containers.
- Keep basements and crawl spaces well ventilated and dry.
- Look for rodent droppings and gnawing marks in food sources, which indicate a pest problem.
- Seal cracks and holes on the outside of the home, including entry points for utilities and pipes.
- Keep tree branches and shrubbery well trimmed and away from the house.
- Repair decaying exterior wood on homes as some insects are drawn to deteriorating wood.
- Replace weather-stripping and repair loose mortar around basement foundation and windows.
- Don't overlook proper drainage at the foundation; install a drainage system, which will channel water away from the home.

Beyond the role that consumers can play in pest prevention, fully understanding integrated pest management allows consumers to make well-informed decisions about pest management practices not just within their own homes but within their local communities. As the public conversation continues about legislating IPM in schools and on public property, consumers will play a critical role in the way IPM is defined and implemented. In articulating a complete and inclusive definition of IPM, consumers can be outstanding advocates for implementing programs

that not only allow for a multitude of options but also encourage the relationship between consumers and pest professionals.

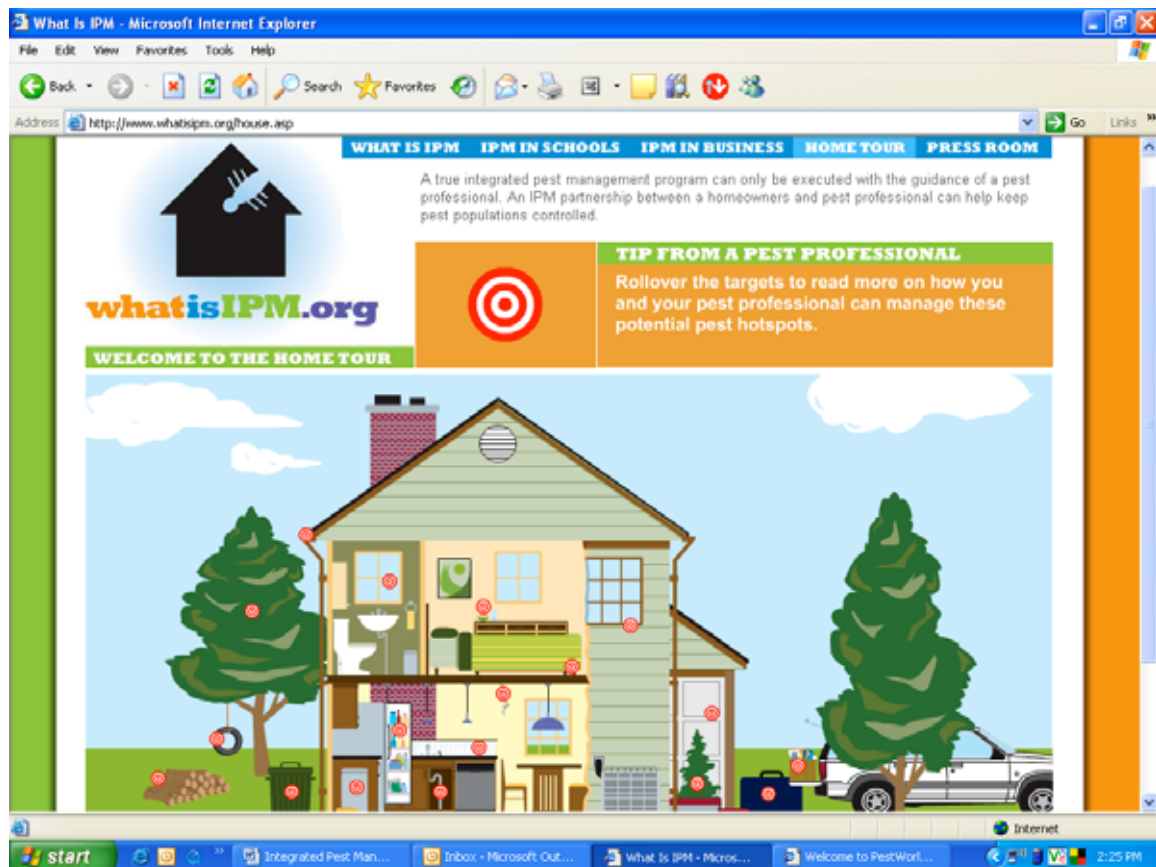
### Selecting a Pest Professional to help Implement an IPM Program

With cooperation a critical component of an IPM program, choosing a pest professional to share in pest management responsibilities is an important decision and one that cannot be made on price alone. The recommendations provided below can help consumers to better understand their IPM options and allow them to make a decision that best serves their family and protects their home.

#### *Educate Yourself*

To further develop a solid understanding of IPM and the risks associated with pests and rodents, two web resources, sponsored by the National Pest Management Association, can elaborate upon this article.

1) WhatisIPM.org offers information on ways to protect both health and property from pests through integrated pest management techniques. This site specifically addresses IPM methods, features an interactive "home" where visitors can learn IPM practices and is updated with current news.



2) PestWorld.org is a comprehensive site, addressing all pest-related areas. It provides pest facts sheets, public service announcements and a zip code locator to find local pest professionals.



### Ask Questions

It is always helpful to contact family or neighbors for recommendations of pest control companies they have previously used. Word of mouth references are likely honest evaluations and ones consumers can believe. When meeting a prospective pest professional, ask if they practice IPM as described throughout this paper. It is important to feel comfortable with the licensed pest professional chosen to help implement an IPM program. Yet, regardless of the situation, do not rush a decision. Consumers are paying for professional knowledge - hire a person whose judgment can be trusted.

### Buy Value, Not Price

If a sizable amount of money is involved in developing an IPM program, feel free to solicit bids from several pest management firms. If a guarantee is given, always know what it covers, how long it lasts and what must be done to keep it in force. Keep in mind that choosing a pest professional is a health and safety decision - the value of the service should outweigh all other factors.

### Summary

Integrated pest management is not a passing fad in the pest profession. As more consumers become aware of IPM and its holistic approach to pest management, it will most likely become a better understood and a more utilized approach. Consumers can use the information and resources provided in this article to properly articulate a consumer-friendly definition of IPM. This definition allows consumers to best protect their family's health and property through a variety of pest management options while also encouraging a strong working relationship with their local licensed pest professional. Ultimately, a sharper understanding of IPM by consumers

will not only affect the day-to-day implementation of IPM programs but also affect the political and public interpretation of IPM as this issue continues to develop.