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Choosing a Pest Control Company

IPM Is the Key

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What Is “IPM” and Why Choose a Company That Uses 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.

In an IPM approach, pesticides are not relied upon as the only response to a pest problem, but are part of an integrated approach with other tactics. When needed, only the lowest risk products are used.

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

- Long-term solutions
- Prevention and avoidance through pest barriers such as window screens, caulked cracks, door sweeps, and good sanitation
- Monitoring and identification of pests
- Treatment: A combination of mechanical (traps), physical (removal), and when necessary, chemical methods

A company that uses an IPM approach can help reduce long-term costs by dealing with the causes of the problem, not just the symptoms. Because low-risk pesticides are used only when needed, environmental and health impacts are reduced as well.

What to Ask a Pest Control Company

In choosing a company, make sure it:

- Is licensed with the Oregon Department of Agriculture
- Is a member of the Oregon Pest Control Association
- 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 uses an IPM approach, 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 (if any) of the 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 giving time to consider all options
- No written contracts or written guarantees
- Offers of regularly scheduled calendar spraying. This is **not** IPM

In the IPM approach, the company identifies conditions that cause the pest problems, helps eliminate the conditions, and may offer regularly scheduled monitoring to determine if a treatment is needed.

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Additional Resources

The National Pesticide Information Center at Oregon State University is a source of unbiased information on pesticides and includes a comprehensive section on Professional Pest Control. <http://npic.orst.edu/pestprof.html>

Green Shield Certified is an independent, nonprofit certification program that promotes practitioner use of effective, prevention-based pest control while minimizing use of pesticides. <http://www.greenshieldcertified.org/>

The Oregon Pest Control Association's pledge to environmental stewardship. <http://www.opca.org/stewardship.htm>

QualityPro is an industry program designed to increase professionalism of the industry through self-regulation. <http://www.npmaqualitypro.org/>

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 conjunction with careful inspection and dealing with underlying conditions, the IPM approach to manage termites includes discussion of all primary control methods.

Bait stations are an alternative to termiticides and can effectively control subterranean termites.