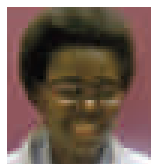




Stay on High Alert for Summer Pests

By Alice Sinia, Ph.D.

Your residents aren't the only ones that look forward to summer – pests also come out in droves to enjoy the nice weather. As you show off your property to potential condo owners and work to please current residents, these unwelcome guests can cause quite the disruption.



More than just a nuisance, pests can make your staffs' jobs more difficult and pose health risks to your residents. Here are just a few of the consequences of pest populations moving into your property:

- **Increased calls to maintenance:** Increases in pest pressures means more residents will call in to report pest sightings. These calls and requests for remediation add financial costs and responsibilities to your staff's already busy schedules.

- **Decreased resident satisfaction:** Your outdoor amenities and luxurious living

spaces are great – and pests agree. Pest sightings can disturb residents and make them less excited about the great features your condominium offers.

- **Negative reviews:** If resident satisfaction is impacted, you could see more negative reviews appear online, which can hurt your reputation among potential owners, as well as overall property value.

- **Health risks:** Stinging pests like bees, wasps and some ants can cause severe allergic reactions in some individuals, but other pests like rodents, birds, cockroaches and flies can spread germs and transmit diseases like E. coli and Salmonella.

Summer is peak pest season, so you should be on high alert for signs of pest activity. Here are a few of the pests that will be looking to move in:

- **Ants** – Social insects, ants sometimes have colonies with more than 500,000 individuals. When threatened, the entire colony can move, making this pest a difficult one to stomp out. Ants love to

eat sugary foods, so spills and trash left outside will lure them in.

- **Cockroaches** – A threat year-round, cockroaches are better at hiding than you are at finding them. They can be brought in by incoming shipments or slide in through cracks as small as 1/6 of a centimetre. These pests are most active at night, so seeing one during the day could be a sign of a larger issue.

- **Flies** – Notorious for buzzing around summer barbecues, flies feed on everything from human food and garbage to carrion and excrement. The filthiest pest, flies quickly spread disease when they land on surfaces around your property, transferring germs from their food to ours.

- **Mosquitoes** – Like flies, mosquitoes are an outdoor nuisance for residents. In addition to causing skin irritation, mosquitoes can spread diseases such as the West Nile virus and encephalitis. Standing water around your property provides mosquitoes the few centimetres

of water they need to breed.

- Stingers (bees, wasps, hornets) – Despite their benefits to the environment, these stinging pests can cause your residents to worry – and rightfully so. Even if a resident is not allergic, the sting can prove quite painful. Seeing a nest around outdoor amenities is a guaranteed turnoff for your current and potential residents.

To control these pests, it's important that you work with your pest management provider to establish an Integrated Pest Management (IPM) plan that focuses on maintenance, sanitation and exclusion as techniques for reducing pest activity. This strategy will help you prevent pest problems before they occur and will improve the appeal of your property. Here are some strategies that your maintenance staff can implement today to reduce your property's curb appeal for pests:

Maintenance

- Keep vegetation trimmed back at least 60 centimetres from the building to help prevent pests from crawling onto the building façade. Ants can use branches to "trail" inside.
- Prune shrubs to reduce mosquito hiding spots.
- Level out holes, ditches or any uneven ground where water can collect.

Sanitation

- Use tight fitting lids on trash cans and remove trash regularly. Wash trash bins regularly as well to prevent build up.
- Clean spills and fix leaks promptly to remove the moisture that attracts pests.
- Regularly clean common areas and

amenities, including any onsite gyms.

Exclusion

- Make sure screens on windows and doors fit tightly. Install and repair weather stripping and door sweeps as well.
 - Seal gaps, cracks and holes around windows, doors, walls and utilities.
- Bird proof potential bird roosting and nesting sites. Deterrents such as spikes can be used as appropriate.

With a strong IPM plan in place, you'll be one step ahead of troublesome summer pests. But even the best plan is for naught if residents don't aid in the prevention efforts. Whether it's inside their condo or outside by the pool, residents' behaviour can both help and hurt your pest control program. Here are some do's and don'ts that you should share with your community:

Do:

- Report signs of pest activity and any maintenance issues to management right away.
- Take out personal trash regularly and use tight fitting lids.
- Monitor indoor and outdoor plants for signs of insect activity.
- Store food and drink in tightly sealed containers.
- Clean spills right away – even if it's just water.
- Dispose of old food at the end of each week to keep refrigerators clean and smelling fresh.

Don't:

- Ignore spills or trash outside, especially in common areas like around pools and grills.

- Leave doors open as you enter or exit the building.

- Avoid washing the dishes. Even food that has been sitting out a few hours can entice pests.
- Overwater plants. Excess moisture can attract pests. Be sure your plants dry out before you water them again.

In addition to following these tips, meet with a pest management provider to review your pest control strategy and identify any weak points around your property. Every property is different and unique conditions like geography, climate, building age and nearby properties or construction can impact your pest pressures. A pest professional can conduct a thorough inspection to identify any warning signs and help you develop a plan that is customized to your community. For the strongest plan, monitor pest activity around your property and adjust your program as needed if pest pressures change. ■

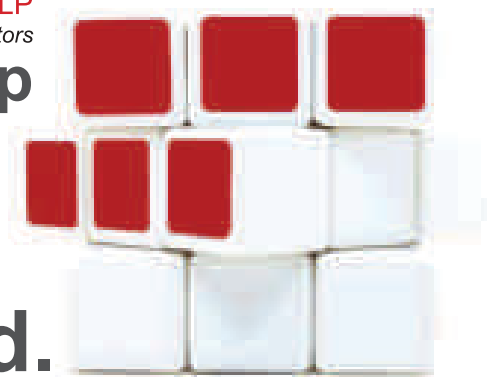
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