

# Five Criteria to Evaluate a Pest Management Provider

When it comes to food manufacturing and processing, high-quality pest management is crucial. Neglecting to hire a trusted provider can be catastrophic from an operational and financial standpoint. A major pest problem could subject your business to loss of profit from damaged products, regulatory compliance penalties like plant shutdowns and — in extreme cases — criminal liability for violations of the Food Drug and Cosmetics Act. At the very least, such an issue could leave a company exposed to risk for costly product recalls and negative publicity.

With those potential outcomes in mind, it's easy to see why food companies need a highly competent pest management provider. But with so many available options, how do you decide who is the most qualified?

A good pest management provider should be able to offer a comprehensive Integrated Pest Management (IPM) program which satisfies all applicable audit standards and requirements for food manufacturing and processing entities.

Beyond this, there are five key qualities to look for in a provider.





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### **EXTENSIVE FOOD INDUSTRY EXPERIENCE**

The food manufacturing and processing industry is a heavily specialized area of pest management, dramatically different from residential or restaurant work performed by many small pest control companies. Between safety rules, varying industrial settings, documentation, audit compliance, professional communications and regulatory compliance, there are many nuances to understand and navigate. Check with potential providers ensure they have considerable experience in your industry.

### **APPLICABLE CREDENTIALS**

All of a provider's technicians need to be certified and licensed by their state's regulatory agency. At the higher levels of management or in technical service roles, all representatives should hold professional certifications such as Registered Sanitarian, Associate Certified Entomologist or Board Certified Entomologist. They may also have advanced technical degrees or training. In addition, these employees may hold certificates of completion for certain training programs on food plant pest management from a university or trade association.

Furthermore, the company itself needs to have a pesticide business license, and each technician needs to be certified in the proper category for your state for the specific types of pesticide applications they will implement at your facility. Some of the most commonly required food industry certifications are structural pests, fumigation and/or stored product pests.

### **TECHNICAL KNOWLEDGE**

Your pest management provider should serve as your source for up-to-date information, including the latest technology and regulations; methods for identifying unknown insects or foreign materials; training resources; and any other helpful information related to pest exclusion and elimination.

### **GEOGRAPHIC COVERAGE AND CONSISTENT SERVICE**

Food companies often have multiple processing facilities. If this is the case for your company, you'll want to ensure a potential provider has the ability to service all of your locations and can offer prompt response times if needed.

### **ADEQUATE REPORTING**

It's important that your provider offers detailed reporting, including regular dashboard reports, so you can follow your pest management status at a glance. This is also crucial for audit compliance in many cases.

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As a facility manager, choosing a pest management provider for your company is one of the most important decisions you can make. When it comes to protecting the bottom line and ensuring compliance, the five tips outlined above form a helpful roadmap in determining which companies to choose and which to avoid. Do your research and select the provider that will best complement your organization, your people and your operations.