



COMMERCIAL SERVICES

Health Facilities Management

This article first appeared on 11-12-2003 in Health Facilities Management online.

Hospital Pest Prevention: Tips to stop insects from making your hospital home

Anyone who works in a health facility will agree that the presence of pests is unacceptable. Not only do pests signal poor sanitation in a place the public expects it the most, but they also can spread harmful bacteria throughout a facility. Flies, for example, can carry more than 100 known pathogens, including anthrax, E. coli, hepatitis, salmonella and staphylococcus. They drop these potentially harmful bacteria every time they land. Frank Meek, technical manager for Orkin Inc., sums it up this way: "Flies can contaminate anything they touch."

Unfortunately, Meek says, flies also are among the most common pests found in healthcare facilities. "With multiple entries and heavy, around-the-clock traffic, hospitals are an easy and attractive target for flies," says Meek. "Once they get inside, they are attracted to areas where foodservice delivery carts go, which often is throughout the building. They also gravitate toward employee locker rooms, even kidney dialysis or intensive care units - anywhere they can find moisture and nutrients."

Given that chemical treatments are a last resort in most health facilities, how can environmental services managers keep flies out without insecticide? Meek offers a few simple tips:

1. Mount outdoor lights at least 100 feet from the building to draw flies and other insects away from the entrance doors.
2. Use sodium vapor lights for entrances and exits. Flies are less attracted to these light sources.
3. Be sure all doors close tightly, forming a seal to the outside.
4. Install plastic-strip doors in receiving areas to minimize airflow from the outside.
5. Install fly lights or glue traps in fly "hot spots" inside the facility.
6. Check and clean drains regularly. Clogged or filthy drains can be a breeding ground for flies.
7. Replace missing or broken ceiling tiles or panels. Flies can breed in the ceiling voids.
8. Review your waste management system. Be sure trash bins throughout the building are emptied regularly. Once collected, trash shouldn't sit on the premises. Work with your waste disposal service to ensure timely pickup.
9. Call for professional help if you need it. Be sure to choose a reputable company with expertise in healthcare environments.