

THE BUSINESS OF PEST MANAGEMENT

# PESTWORLD

MAY | JUNE 2024

NPMAPESTWORLD.ORG

## TECHNOLOGY TRENDS

USING THE LATEST INNOVATIONS  
TO RUN YOUR COMPANY MORE  
EFFICIENTLY AND EFFECTIVELY



### INSIDE:

WHAT'S THE TIME AND  
PLACE FOR AI?

EMBRACING TECHNOLOGY

LIBRARY UPDATE: THE WIDOWS



**NPMA**<sup>®</sup>

National Pest Management Association



Dedicated to being your Preferred Choice.



Setup



Products



Technicians



Routes



Dashboard



Reports

# Veseris

## INVENTORY MANAGER

### App based simplicity for easy use on any screen

At Veseris, we deliver positive impact by equipping professionals to succeed. That's why we created Inventory Manager — a free web-based app for Veseris customers that automates asset tracking and ordering.

- Designed for easy setup and use to accommodate diverse ranges of software experience and comfort at the field level
- Manage an unlimited number of products
- Manage an unlimited number of branch locations and trucks
- All from an iPhone, iPad, Android phone or tablet, or computer



Scan here to download the  
**Veseris Inventory Manager White Paper.**

Contact your Veseris Sales Rep or call 1-800-888-4897 to learn more.



# CONTENTS

MAY | JUNE 2024

## DEPARTMENTS

- 04** President's Message
- 16** Rebranding Your Business
- 18** 20 Years of Raising the Bar by Holding the Line
- 20** Ask the Expert
- 21** Calendar of Events
- 21** What's the Buzz?
- 22** Index to Advertisers

## FEATURES



6

### WHAT'S THE TIME AND PLACE FOR AI?

Up-and-coming AI tools can be used to improve efficiency and effectiveness as long as you use them in a targeted, forward-thinking way.



9

### EMBRACING TECHNOLOGY

NPMA members are using new tools to improve their business operations, including review generation software, route optimization software, AI and more.



12

### THE WIDOWS: SPIDERS OF THE *LATRODECTUS* GENUS IN NORTH AMERICA

The widow spiders are some of the most recognizable spiders in North America. This library update gives more information on the genus *Latrodectus*.



**18** 20 Years of Raising the Bar by Holding the Line



Follow NPMA on social media at:  
LinkedIn ([linkedin.com/company/nationalpestmgt](https://www.linkedin.com/company/nationalpestmgt))  
Facebook ([facebook.com/NationalPestManagementAssn](https://www.facebook.com/NationalPestManagementAssn))  
X, formerly known as Twitter ([@NationalPestMgt](https://twitter.com/NationalPestMgt))

EXCLUSIVELY FOR MEMBERS ONLY OF THE NATIONAL PEST MANAGEMENT ASSOCIATION | [NMPAPESTWORLD.ORG](https://www.npmapestworld.org)

# PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE



## Leading the Way Towards a Brighter Tomorrow

MARILLIAN MISSITI, Buono Pest Control Co., Inc.

**A**s my term as President comes to a close, I find myself reflecting on the incredible strides our industry has made. This issue of *PestWorld* magazine is dedicated to exploring the myriad ways in which one of those advancements—technology—has transformed and continues to shape our profession.

In our feature article, “Measuring ROI on Technology,” we delve into the critical question many of us face: how do we ensure that the technology investments we make truly benefit our businesses? It’s not just about adopting the latest gadgets; it’s about strategically selecting technologies that align with our goals and investing in the training necessary to maximize their potential. As leaders in the pest management industry, it’s imperative that we stay informed and discerning when it comes to integrating new technologies into our operations.

Our second feature, “What’s the Time and Place for AI?,” explores the revolutionary impact of artificial intelligence on our field. From pest detection to creating customized treatment plans, AI offers unparalleled opportunities for efficiency, accuracy and innovation. As we navigate the ever-evolving landscape of pest management, understanding the practical applications of AI is essential for staying ahead of the curve.

I want to extend my heartfelt gratitude to each and every one of you, our dedicated members, for your unwavering commitment to protecting public health, food and property. It has been an honor and a privilege to serve as your President, and I am continually inspired by the passion and dedication demonstrated by our membership.

I also want to express my deepest appreciation to the NPMA Board and Executive Committee for their guidance and support throughout my tenure. Your tireless efforts have been instrumental in advancing our collective mission and ensuring the continued success of our association. To the hardworking staff of NPMA, thank you for your dedication and professionalism. Your behind-the-scenes work is the backbone of our organization, and I am profoundly grateful for all that you do.

Lastly, I would be remiss if I did not acknowledge my family, and colleagues at Buono Pest Control. Your unwavering support has been the driving force behind my success, and I am profoundly grateful for your love, encouragement and understanding.

As I pass the torch to my successor, Faye Golden, I am filled with optimism for the future of our industry. Together, we will continue to embrace scientific and technological innovation, foster collaboration and lead the way towards a brighter tomorrow. ○

### NPMA STRATEGIC PARTNERS



### NPMA KEY PARTNERS



THE BUSINESS OF PEST MANAGEMENT

# PESTWORLD

PUBLISHED FOR:

National Pest Management Association  
10460 North Street, Fairfax, VA 22030  
703.352.6762 or 800.678.6722  
npma@pestworld.org

PROFESSIONAL AND MEMBER WEBSITE:

npmapestworld.org

CONSUMER WEBSITE:

pestworld.org

**CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER:**

Dominique Stumpf, CAE

**EDITOR:** Jennifer J. Johnson, CAE

### 2023–2024 NPMA Board

**PRESIDENT:** Marillian Missiti

**PRESIDENT-ELECT:** Faye Golden

**TREASURER:** Emily Thomas Kendrick

**SECRETARY:** Mike Bullert

**IMMEDIATE PAST PRESIDENT:**

Justin McCauley

**PAST PRESIDENT REPRESENTATIVE:**

Chris Gorecki

PUBLISHED BY:



550 SW 2nd Avenue  
Gainesville, FL 32601  
800.369.6220  
www.naylor.com

**PUBLISHER:** Ben Hopper

**EDITOR:** Robin Lamerson

**LAYOUT/COVER DESIGN:**

Amit Kumar Singh

PUBLISHED APRIL 2024/NPMAS0324

COVER: PEOPLEIMAGES.COM - YURI A/  
SHUTTERSTOCK.COM

©2024 Naylor, LLC. All rights reserved.  
The contents of this publication may not be reproduced by any means, in whole or in part, without the prior written consent of the publisher.

*PestWorld* is the bi-monthly publication of the National Pest Management Association (NPMA).

**NEW**

# CADET<sup>3</sup>

## ALL-WEATHER BLOX<sup>®</sup>

### TAKE CONTROL OF THE POPULATION AND ELIMINATE RODENT INFESTATIONS

**AVAILABLE NOW:  
D<sub>3</sub> BLOX  
OPTIMIZED  
FOR MAXIMUM  
PALATABILITY**



#### PRODUCT FEATURES:

- Active Ingredient: Cholecalciferol
- Kills anticoagulant-resistant Norway rats, roof rats & house mice
- Proven weatherability: both mold and moisture resistant
- Can be used in any environment, including indoors and outdoors
- MADE IN THE U.S.A.

PRODUCT  
CADET All-Weather BLOX

CODE  
CD1018

PALLET QTY  
48 cases



SCAN ME



THE WORLD LEADER IN RODENT CONTROL TECHNOLOGY<sup>®</sup>

[www.belllabs.com](http://www.belllabs.com)

# WHAT'S THE TIME AND PLACE FOR AI?

*Up-and-coming AI tools can be used to improve efficiency and effectiveness as long as you use them in a targeted, forward-thinking way.*

SANDY SMITH

In just a little over a year, artificial intelligence tools like ChatGPT and Bard have taken off, offering a shortcut to unstick writer's block or analyze massive amounts of data. While generative AI tools like these have gotten attention, AI is also being deployed in business systems, using a company's own data to offer insights, and in search engines to help refine searches.

AI tools bring plenty of questions, but they also offer opportunities. Some may approach AI as a futuristic dream in which the most mundane tasks are handed over to a computer. Others may genuinely fear AI, worried that they may be out of a job. No matter the outlook, smart companies are exploring the possibilities of AI, if cautiously, to provide deeper insights into all aspects of business operations.

## LOW-HANGING FRUIT

Generative AI tools are used to create, or generate, new content, including the written word, images and videos. It's a rapidly expanding technology and certainly one that has drawn a lot of attention, and for good reason, says Dauphin Ewart, CEO of The Bug Master, a company that has a staff of more than 80 and services central Texas. "A lot of the uses come from individuals using generative AI to do something

they already do," he said. "It might be polishing an email, creating sales messaging or writing blog content."

His company also uses AI content as a "starting point" for job descriptions or a training outline. "It's a shortcut for work that still needs an expert. The quality of the content is pretty variable and still needs somebody to make judgement calls."

Free AI tools make anything that is input available for others to use, meaning sensitive and specific information should be avoided. But many of these same tools offer paid enterprise versions, where the data remains owned by the user.

AJ Treleven, director of operations at Sprague Pest Solutions, said his company is exploring those enterprise tools. "You can use that as a knowledge base to generate further policies and procedures, or create Q&As. We put in our procedure to a certain service and can query against it."

Company-specific training documents also can be input with the AI tool, generating quizzes or additional lesson plans.

## A LAYER ABOVE

Many enterprise tools, whether a CRM like Salesforce or business system like Microsoft 365, are deploying AI to enhance their services.



GPT

“I do believe when you **COMBINE THE FACTORS OF LARGE LANGUAGE MODELS AND AI** with remote sensing devices like door sensors and light sensors, we’ll be **ABLE TO ASSESS THE CURRENT PROBLEM** and very likely a **cause-and-effect relationship**.”

—AJ Treleven, director of operations,  
Sprague Pest Solutions

“Some of these less visible ways might be more impactful,” Ewart said. “Financial tools like Dext or Bill.com are able to predictably understand vendors and where they might be coded. I’m not saying they’re perfect, but they are closer than some of the buzzy, fun, shiny things.”

Ewart sees opportunities to help managers in particular handle massive amounts of data for more targeted actions.

“Contact center solutions are interesting, but a lot of where I’m seeing the development is around quality, using AI to grade calls and notice trends. It’s big data analysis rather than replacing an agent,” Ewart said. “In my mind, if you could have someone able to manage five people, this would allow you to manage 20.”

While his company has used AI chatbots, “I personally think those are further than what we’d be happy with.” Ewart considers the customer interaction as a “pretty sacred transaction. That’s the last place I’m going to have us screw up.”

With any new tool, there are mistakes, particularly as the tool learns. “If you miscode a bunch of financial transactions, go back and fix it,” Ewart said. “But if you screw up how you handle 100 leads, you did something pretty negative. The question is, where are you willing to suffer the learning curve as well? All of these are going to have learning curves.”

The real opportunity may be in deploying AI to find connection points between a variety of disparate sources. “We’ve got millions of datapoints going back 20 years,” Treleven said. Sprague focuses exclusively on the commercial market, with the largest part of its customer base working in the food industry. “We’re starting to try to apply that data to give us new insight and predictive analytics. We’re moving away from preventative to predictive.”

That might mean using an AI tool to assess how humidity levels could dictate breeding rates of pests and rodents. “Using that publicly available data, along with internally collected datasets, we don’t have to do a preventative treatment on every building, but only on those that are most likely to be impacted,” Treleven said.

The AI tool can account for variables like weather conditions. Take winter 2024, for instance. It was a “pretty normal El Nino winter,” Treleven said. But a typical El Nino hasn’t happened in years. “How do I correlate what’s happened now to the last time? It can prepare us and help us focus and train. It can start to inform the conversations we have so that we can offer a value add to our customers.”

For his part, Ewart believes there is more work to be done in this area. “Sensors might give you temperature, moisture, but sensing ant activity can be very hard. Figuring out how you generate sensors that are as cost effective as sending a person, I’m not convinced that it’s actually been solved yet. Just like with generative AI, the new thing wasn’t the algorithm, it was the training and it was done by ingesting an incredible amount of data. You need a data source. Then you have to have a really good way to use those data sources to create modules that you can train. I think we’re pretty far from that.”

He does see opportunities in marketing because of the large available datasets. “You can take your customer data, your closing percentages, and map those back out to the world to find where in nearby markets are your most ideal customers. You can use that data to understand what the lead costs are on those, what search volume looks like and what it’s taking to generate leads in those spaces. I am sure there are people doing some version of that right now.”

## THE FUTURE

With the rapid pace of adoption and the speed at which AI tools are learning, some of these points may be outdated by the time the printed magazine hits a desk. But Treleven believes AI plays a key role as the pest management industry moves from integrated pest management to progressive pest management.

“I jokingly talk about it as pest clairvoyance,” Treleven said. “I do believe when you combine the factors of large language models and AI with remote sensing devices like door sensors and light sensors, we’ll be able to assess the current problem and very likely a cause-and-effect relationship. All these data points would tell us the most likely place to have an issue—and we’ll know before it happens. That level of clarity or lack of surprise is better for our team and the customers. We can all deal with something that has been planned for. It’s less of mental gymnastics to get through.”

When the computer does the thinking—or at least a good portion of it—mental gymnastics can be kept to a minimum and that thought time can be spent elsewhere. It’s clear that AI has a long way to go, but the speed at which machines are learning will require virtually every company to pay attention—and to explore the options. ○



# EMBRACING TECHNOLOGY

*NPMA members use new tools to improve business operations.*

NICK FORTUNA

**T**hese days, it seems like consumers are expected to tip employees every time they purchase a product or service, including sit-down meals, takeout food, haircuts, food delivery, housekeeping and transportation. The trend has resulted in widespread “tip fatigue,” according to a 2023 survey from Bankrate, which found that 66% of consumers now have a negative view of tipping.

But what if clients could tip pest-control technicians for exemplary service without spending a dime of their own money? And what if NPMA members could improve their online reputation and search-engine rankings at relatively little expense?

That's the idea behind review generation software, which automatically sends out text messages or emails encouraging clients to submit online reviews of businesses. Donnie Shelton, owner of Raleigh, N.C.-based Triangle Pest Control, said his company recently implemented the software, and he's pleased with the results.

The text message sent to clients says the company gives a small monetary reward to technicians when they receive positive reviews and provides a link to an online review form. The bonuses incentivize technicians to provide top-notch customer service, and the stream of new reviews helps Triangle Pest Control to stand out in online search results, Shelton said.

"It's a way for clients to tip their technician without actually spending money, and it obviously benefits us because in the digital space, fresh, good reviews make a big difference," he said.

Review generation software is just one of the technological tools NPMA members are using to grow their businesses, streamline their procedures and enhance their customer service. Other tech advances such as route optimization software and artificial intelligence are enabling pest-management companies to save time and money while exploring new business strategies.

## MINIMIZING DRIVE TIME

Shelton said Triangle Pest Control recently implemented route optimization software, automating a process that used to be handled by an employee. The software has made a difference, with technicians using less fuel and spending less time driving from job to job, but since the worker handling that task was proficient, the gains haven't been transformative, he said.

However, the software freed up the employee to move into a hybrid role, assisting customers who have questions as well as technicians in the field.

"We already were pretty well optimized, so we didn't see a huge impact, but we were able to move that employee into a bigger and better role, so that was a big win for us," Shelton said.

Triangle Pest Control recently began using ChatGPT as a resource for customer-service and inside-sales professionals. The company loaded its policies, procedures and other

relevant information into the AI platform so when workers have a question, such as how to use a particular feature of Triangle's customer relationship management system, they can obtain a detailed answer in seconds.

ChatGPT scans vast quantities of documentation and produces answers much faster than a human ever could, which streamlines customer service and other processes. The results are accurate most of the time, Shelton said.

"What I like about it is that over time, it gets better and better as we train it more and more," he said.

Looking ahead, Shelton said AI could become a big asset for technicians in the field. He envisions a time when they can snap a picture of a pest and have an AI platform quickly identify it and provide a list of best practices for eliminating it. Armed with detailed information about any pest they may encounter, technicians would be more effective and efficient in the field.

"It would be like having an entomologist at their side every step of the way," Shelton said. "That, to me, is the vision, and I think it would make our service way better."

## AN ARRAY OF VENDORS

Rian and Noelle Goins, the husband-and-wife team behind Get Goins Pest Control in Los Angeles, said they're regularly approached by AI service providers pledging to increase their business by 20% or more within the first year.

The vendors offer a wide range of services, including chatbots that assist with customer intake on a corporate website or telephone line. The chatbots can collect customers' information and answer basic questions, and workers can enter the live chat as needed to provide personalized assistance.

AI also can identify which pest-management issues local residents are searching for online and use that data to generate informative blog posts. Having relevant content that's frequently refreshed is one way companies can improve their search-engine rankings. In addition, companies are using AI to generate marketing content and schedule social-media posts for optimal impact. (For more information on AI technology, see page 6.)

Noelle Goins said her company is considering using AI for simple tasks such as customer intake, but when it comes to marketing and social media, she plans to stick with a personal touch. The couple regularly films informative content to

“Review generation software is just one of the **TECHNOLOGICAL TOOLS NPMA MEMBERS ARE USING TO GROW THEIR BUSINESSES, STREAMLINE THEIR PROCEDURES AND ENHANCE THEIR CUSTOMER SERVICE.** Other tech advances such as route optimization software and artificial intelligence are enabling pest-management companies to save time and money while exploring new business strategies.”

share on LinkedIn, YouTube, Facebook, Instagram and TikTok, showcasing their expertise and promoting the industry.

“One benefit of AI is that it can free up your time,” Rian Goins said. But when it comes to connecting with customers, securing repeat business and winning referrals, AI simply can’t compete with human authenticity, he added.

“We understand that staying abreast of AI technology is vital so you don’t get left behind,” Noelle Goins said. “It’s also important not to let AI take over your pest-control operations to a fault. Tailoring AI to the needs of your company is the wisest approach, as it is not a one-size-fits-all for every company’s infrastructure.”

### AI IN THE BOARDROOM

AI has the power to help business executives weigh new strategies and make better decisions, according to Todd Leyse, president and chief executive of Medina, Minn.-based Adam’s Pest Control. He’s used ChatGPT to create an AI-powered “advisory board,” with different AI agents serving as chief financial officer, chief technology officer, marketing manager, product development manager, sales manager and user-experience expert.

Each AI agent brings a different skillset to the table. When Leyse wants to improve any aspect of the business, he can ask for recommendations, and the AI agents will quickly produce a detailed list of action items. Some can be discarded immediately, but others have resonated with Leyse, prompting him to dig deeper, asking more-detailed questions to refine the recommendations.

Leyse said the AI agents have offered useful tips on how to acquire new customers, capture more revenue per customer and market the business. When one AI agent ceased offering productive input, he kicked it off the advisory board. To prevent groupthink from a bunch of AI-powered yes men, Leyse even instructed the AI agents to offer dissenting opinions.

“AI can do a lot more than just brainstorm and write copy about centipedes,” Leyse said. “You’ll get out of it what you put into it, but it gives me answers in a well-written, easily digestible way. If you were sitting around the conference room talking with smart people, it might take an hour or two to produce a document as well written as AI can help you produce in 10 minutes.”

Leyse said Adam’s Pest Control has grown for 53 consecutive years and now has about 145 employees, but he doesn’t expect AI to replace workers. Instead, he sees it as a tool for making his existing staff more productive.

As an example, Leyse points to the Blu Star Field Service Management System, which Adam’s Pest Control sells to other pest-management companies. AI is helping to write code and add features to that CRM system, but the company still hired a new software developer in early February to assist with development.

“AI is helping us to write code better and faster, and that’s been really helpful, but we still needed to make that hire,” Leyse said. “We’ll still need to add people as we grow, but probably not as many people, and maybe we’ll be looking for a different skillset.”

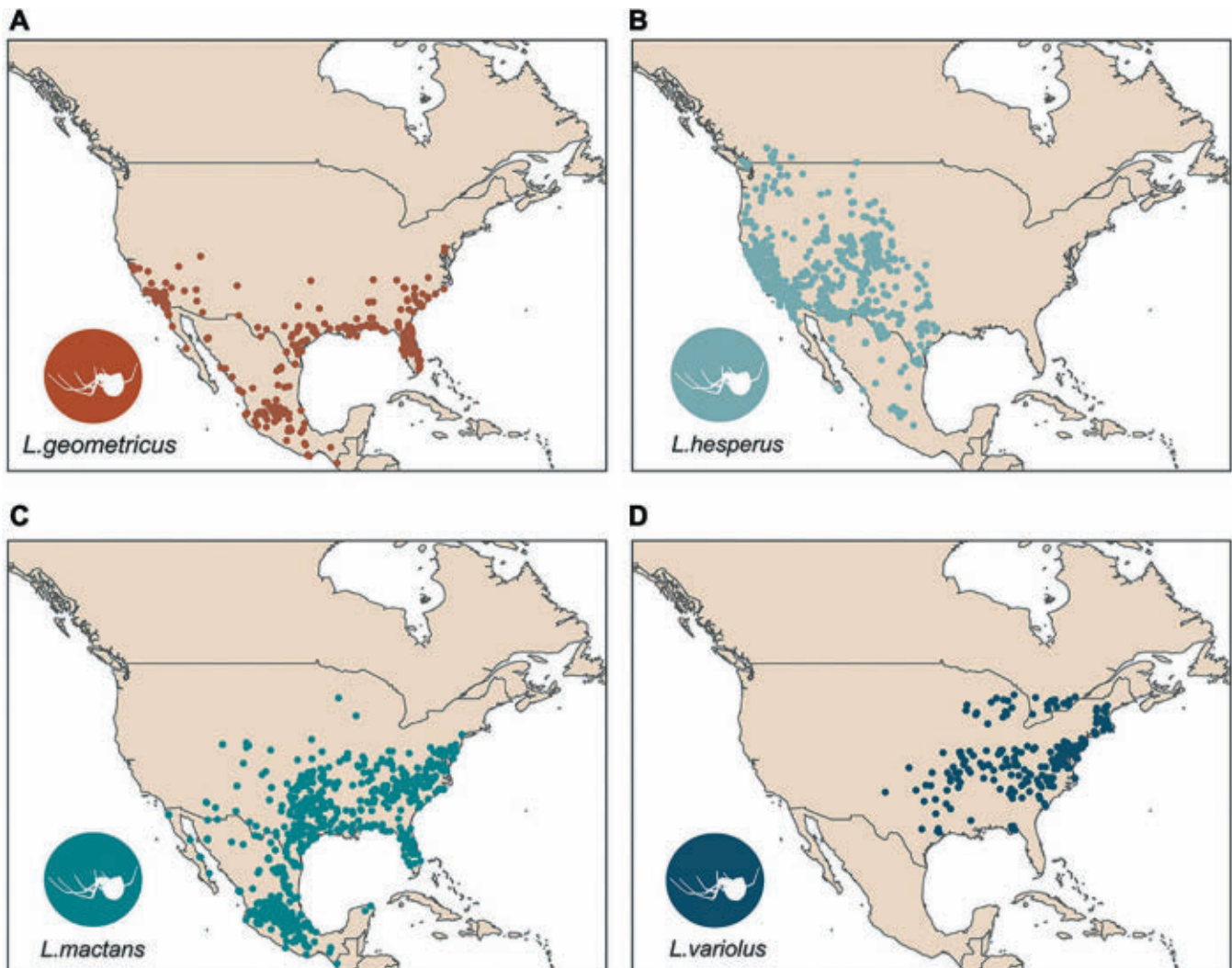
# THE WIDOWS:

## SPIDERS OF THE *LATRODECTUS* GENUS IN NORTH AMERICA

LAURA ROSENWALD, BCE, Training & Resource Center Manager, NPMA

**T**he widow spiders are some of the most recognizable spiders in North America. They belong to the genus *Latrodectus* in the Family Theridiidae, which are the cobweb weavers. This family is easily distinguished by their teardrop-shaped abdomens that taper to a point at the spinnerets, as well as

their messy and irregular three-dimensional webs containing vertical silk lines. *Latrodectus* contains over 30 species that can be found around the world, but several of these species call North America home. The adult females of this genus are often recognizable by their distinct shiny black



Subsampled occurrence points in North America used for SDMs for *L. geometricus* (A), *L. hesperus* (B), *L. mactans* (C), *L. variolus* (D).

coloration with red “hourglass” patterning. However, this is not the case for all widow species, and the markings are not always visible. In addition, males and juveniles of the widow species look drastically different both in color and size. The common name “widow” comes from the observation that some adult females in this genus eat the male following mating. However, this name is a misnomer, as female widows rarely engage in this behavior.

## LATROTOXIN

Members of the *Latrodectus* genus are medically relevant pests, as their venom contains a neurotoxin known as latrotoxin. Latrotoxin can induce pain at the bite site, muscle

rigidity, vomiting and sweating. Most people bitten by widow spiders make a full recovery, but the elderly, children and immunocompromised are the most susceptible to serious illness and death. While all widows are capable of biting, only the adult females of this genus have fangs long enough to puncture human skin and often only bite in self-defense. Bites are easily treated with the use of anti-venom. If bitten, seek medical attention immediately and try to bring the spider to a medical professional to ensure proper treatment. However, wearing personal protective equipment (PPE) such as gloves in areas where widow spiders are suspected to inhabit is often enough to protect yourself from bites.

PHOTO BY JUDY GALLAGHER



## NORTHERN BLACK WIDOW (*L. VARIOLUS*)

Despite the name, the Northern Black Widow’s range extends from Canada to Florida and across the eastern half of North America. This species features the classic shiny black with red markings. These spiders can be easily distinguished from other widow species by the “hourglass” marking underneath the abdomen, as it features a break in the red “hourglass” that is not seen in the other widow species. Northern Black Widow females may also feature a line of red dots down the back, particularly in the younger individuals. Their legs may also feature a reddish color. Adult females measure in at approximately 9–11 mm in body length, with males measuring in at about half the size of the females. Egg sacs of this species are round and have a tan paper-like appearance.

PHOTO BY JAMES GATHANY



## SOUTHERN BLACK WIDOW (*L. MACTANS*)

The Southern Black Widow is often considered to be the “original” Black Widow and is arguably one of the most recognizable spiders in North America. This species has been documented all across North America, but is most commonly found in the southeastern parts of the continent. Adult females feature the shiny black coloration across the body and the legs. Southern Black Widows can easily be distinguished from the Northern Black Widow as their red hourglass is complete and does not feature a break. The hourglass marking in this species is also often wider at the bottom compared to the top when the female reaches adulthood. This species also commonly features an additional red spot just above their spinnerets. The body length of adult females is between 8–13 mm, and the males are approximately half that size. The egg sacs of this species are tan to grey in coloration but are distinct based on their circular shape with a single point.

PHOTO BY MARSHAL HEDIN



### WESTERN BLACK WIDOW (*L. HESPERUS*)

The Western Black Widow is practically indistinguishable from the Southern Black Widow in terms of morphology and appearance but can often be distinguished by geographic location. Some individuals of this species can be distinguished by the hourglass being more in proportion compared to the Southern Black Widow. While there is some overlap in the range of these two species, the Western Black Widow is generally restricted to the Western half of North America, while the Southern Black Widow is much more common in the Southeast. Much like the Southern Black Widow, adult Western Black Widow females are a glossy black color with the complete red hourglass underneath the abdomen. Western Black Widows may also feature a red spot near their spinnerets. This is the largest widow species, with adult females measuring between 14–16 mm, and with the males measuring at half that size. This species also features tan to grey egg sacs that are generally circular but feature a single point.

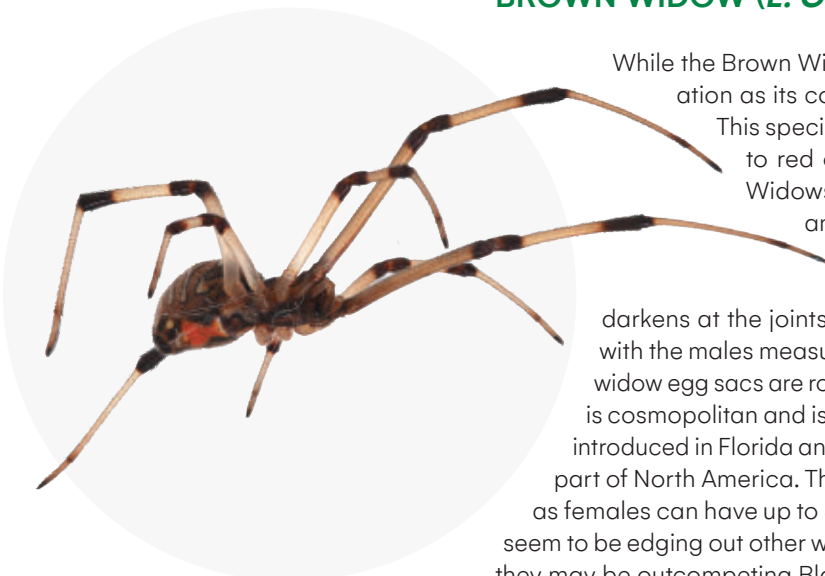
PHOTO BY DINOSARDAN



### RED WIDOW (*L. BISHOPI*)

The Red Widow is the rarest widow that you may encounter in North America, as it is generally restricted to the sand pine scrub habitats of south and central Florida. However, this species may take residence in sheds, garages, and firewood. They are large spiders, with the females measuring in around 12 mm in body length. The males are much smaller than the females. The cephalothorax and legs of this species are red orange, with a black abdomen. The abdomen will feature several red, orange or black spots that are surrounded by a white outline. The distinctive hourglass is much reduced in the Red Widow to two small red marks. Egg sacs of this species are smooth and creamy white in color.

PHOTO BY MATTHEW FIELD



### BROWN WIDOW (*L. GEOMETRICUS*)

While the Brown Widow does not share the same distinctive coloration as its cousins, it still features the infamous “hourglass.” This species is light brown in color and features an orange to red orange hourglass under the abdomen. Brown Widows will also often feature distinctive black, white and brown geometric patterning on the sides of the abdomen, which is where their species name originates. The coloration on the legs darkens at the joints. Females are around 12–16 mm in body length, with the males measuring in between 6–8 mm with longer legs. Brown widow egg sacs are round, pale tan, and covered in spikes. This species is cosmopolitan and is a frequent stowaway in human trade. It was first introduced in Florida and has quickly spread across most of the southern part of North America. This is likely due to its high reproductive potential, as females can have up to 5,000 young a year. Brown Widows additionally seem to be edging out other widow species in the same areas, suggesting that they may be outcompeting Black Widows for the same resources.

## MANAGEMENT

The management of widow spiders is much like the management of any other pest spider, but extra care should be taken regarding medically relevant species such as widows. Spiders often congregate where there is easy access to shelter and food. Often, the presence of spiders can indicate that there is another pest issue persisting in the same area, so inspection should be a key part of your management strategy. Not only should you be looking for potential food sources for the spiders but keep an eye out for signs of spider activity, including webs, egg sacs and the spiders themselves. Widow webs are distinctive by their messy three-dimensional appearance with vertical or nearly-vertical anchor lines running through them. Widows generally choose areas that are sheltered and rarely disturbed, which can include both natural and manmade structures. Most spider management efforts will involve non-chemical methods, such as implementation of a regular cleaning schedule, eliminating potential harborages and changing exterior lighting. In some cases, the use of insecticides may be necessary. Follow and adhere to all pesticide label instructions when applying and focus on the areas of activity as well as their harborages. The combination of both non-chemical methods along with

chemical methods will be your best bet for management of spider infestations. □

## REFERENCES

- Johnson, J. Chadwick, Trubl, Patricia, Blackmore, Valerie, Miles, Lindsay. 2011. *Male black widows court well-fed females more than starved females: silken cues indicate sexual cannibalism risk*. *Animal Behavior*. Vol. 82, Issue 2. Pg. 383–390. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.anbehav.2011.05.018>
- Ushkaryov, Yuri A., Rohou, Alexis, Sugita, Shuzo. 2008.  *$\alpha$ -Latrotoxin and Its Receptors*. *Handbook of Experimental Pharmacology*. 184, pg. 171–206. [https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-540-74805-2\\_7](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-540-74805-2_7)
- Vetter, Richard S. and Ibister, Geoffrey K., 2008. *Medical Aspects of Spider Bites*. *Annual Review of Entomology*. Vol. 53. 409–429. <https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev.ento.53.103106.093503>
- Bradley, Richard A. 2013. "Common Spiders of North America". University of California Press.
- Sadir, Melissa, Marske, Katherine A. 2021. *Urban Environments Aid Invasion of Brown Widows (Theridiidae: Latrodectus geometricus) in North America, Constraining Regions of Overlap and Mitigating Potential Impact on Native Widows*. *Frontiers in Ecology and Evolution*. Volume 9. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fevo.2021.757902>
- Rust, Michael K., Vetter, Richard S., Reiersen, Donald A. 2010. *Cobweb Management and Low-risk Sprays as IPM Strategies to Control the Marbled Cellar Spider, Holocnemus pluchei (Araneae: Pholcidae)*. NPMA Research Reports. <https://www.npmapestworld.org/content-pages/technical-resources/pmf-research-reports/research-report-cobweb-management-and-low-risk-sprays-as-ipm-strategies-to-control-the-marbled-cellar-spider-holocnemus-pluchei-araneae-pholcidae/>



**Center for Urban and Industrial Pest Management**  
*Bringing you top notch training and certification programs in*  
**Integrated Pest Management**

APPROVED FOR CREDIT/CERTIFICATION IN UP TO 40 STATES!



Subscribe to our newsletter

## Pest Management Conference Series

### Conference Series Video Packs

Available through Purdue Online - Registration Open NOW



Visit our Website

 Dr. Cassie Keel	 Mark Shepherdjian	 Jeff McGovern	 Dr. Bobby Corrigan	 Dr. Arveya Gondhalekar	 Dr. Faith Di	 Mike Bentley	 Mark KonderWisp	 Dr. Jody Green
--	--	--	---	---	---	---	--	---

Offering CCH/CEU Hours in:

-  STRUCTURAL
-  WOOD DESTROYING ORGANISMS
-  PUBLIC HEALTH IPM
-  MINI COURSE  
4 hours in most all Indiana categories

MARKETING CORNER

# REBRANDING Your BUSINESS

JIM FREDERICKS, Executive Director, PPMA

PHOTONPHOTOSHUTTERSTOCK.COM





**W**hen you first launch your pest control business, one of the first important steps you take is deciding your brand. Logos, colors and a cohesive appearance can make or break a customer's first impression of your business, especially if they are aware of your competitors within the industry. Even if you've landed on a brand you like and plan on keeping it for a while, every few years you'll find it has become outdated as design trends change. But don't worry, this is common! In fact, 74% of the S&P 100 companies have rebranded their business in the first seven years. Rebranding is a big undertaking but can have significant payoffs if done correctly.

### HOW TO KNOW IT'S TIME FOR A REBRAND

Some pest control businesses could be tempted to rebrand if sales are slowing or if they feel they are not reaching their

target audience. While this seems like the right next step, businesses should reconsider and reevaluate their marketing programs instead to see if they can avoid the cost and heavy lift associated with a rebrand.

One way you can know if it's time for a rebrand is if you feel your business' vision or mission has changed. Your business might have a different message or model now compared to when you first launched your business, and your brand needs to reflect that.

Another reason for a rebrand is if your target audience has changed. Look at your current brand and determine whether it would appeal to your new potential customers. If not, adjust your tone and look to fit their appeal.

As mentioned, competition can also have a significant impact on your decision to rebrand your business. If your customers can't tell you apart or if you think your competition has the upper hand when it comes to their brand, this could be a good reason to consider a rebrand to set your pest control business apart from others.

Lastly, and the most obvious, determine if your branding is outdated. Even the best logo has an expiration date, as seen with major companies like Pepsi, Starbucks and Apple. Giving your business a fresh look can instill confidence and even be what catches a potential customer's eye.

### WHAT TO CONSIDER DURING A REBRAND

Rebranding is more than refreshing your logo, even though that is a significant part of the process. There are several other steps that must be taken, including logistical concerns like ensuring there aren't any trademark issues and that you're prepared for the legal requirements if you are changing your business' name. Those steps include:

- Shifting your brand position, ensuring your new mission and values are included to communicate them to your customers. If you've changed your mission or values, does your new slogan match up?
- Integrating your new brand visuals into social media assets, any printed materials and your website to rebuild your brand identity. This includes your new logo, colors, fonts, etc. Are you following brand guidelines to ensure you're being consistent after the transition?
- Updating your marketing program, depending on how significant your target audience has changed. If your business performed market research during your rebrand, look at the data and make changes to your marketing program so you're reaching potential customers following launch.

Whether you're doing a partial or full rebrand, it's a decision that can have positive impact on your business but should be approached in a careful and deliberate manner. Don't jump right into it without doing your research and weighing the benefits. Businesses that put in the work for a rebrand to understand who they are and have a clear vision what they want to become are the ones that see the most success. ○

# 20 YEARS OF RAISING THE BAR BY HOLDING THE LINE

GRIFFIN VOLTSMANN, Certification Program Manager, QualityPro

**2024** marks the twentieth anniversary of the most recognized and accepted credentialing authority of the professional pest management industry. While the technology we all use has changed, the core of what we do, our professional standards, have remained constant. Accredited companies represent the best of our industry across all standards of excellence, internal and external.

### COMMUNICATING WITH CUSTOMERS

The heart of what we do as an industry is building relationships on trust with customers as we protect them from pests. Communication is key and QualityPro companies

have been on the forefront of adopting new best practices as they become available.

Over the last two decades, we've seen greater reliance on new communications technology to build and maintain customer relationships. Sales teams have moved from phone calls to email to texts to interacting with customers every step of the way through apps. QualityPro requires our companies to keep to strict standards for communication with customers requiring integrity, consistency and documentation that remain just as applicable now as when they were first written.

Companies training new sales staff have seen enormous success through creating and maintaining digital repositories



“The steps taken to professionalize through **QUALITYPRO ACCREDITATION ARE BASED IN A DEEP UNDERSTANDING** of what it takes to be excellent in our industry, and that’s why they’ve stood the test of time.”

of account information, process documents and company policies so that all employees have the same pool of information at their fingertips and are all trained to the same standard. Our customers expect a professional, transparent and uniform experience regardless of which specific technician is performing the service. To put it another way, you want the client to be loyal to your company, not your employee. While technology has made providing that for them easier, the guiding principle at work has always been true.

What has also remained true across 20 years is the value of QualityPro accreditation as a selling tool for your company. Accreditation and cobranding allow sales staff to communicate to customers how your company meets the highest standards for employee training and business operations.

### COMMUNICATING WITH EMPLOYEES

As teams have moved from in-office to remote to hybrid and back again, technology and innovation have raced to bridge interpersonal gaps and bring teams closer together. Pest management companies have been on the cutting edge of this race since the nature of our business has always meant managing a team of technicians in the field from an office. Our companies have adapted to and overcome challenges that crippled other industries, relying on clear internal communication practices to maintain engagement among a spread-out workforce, and adopting technology solutions like more sophisticated route-management software and SDS apps to make it easier for field employees to maintain consistent quality across all service appointments.

Technology can only do half of the job. Once those gaps are bridged, people and principles have to take the work the rest of the way. Excellent sales cultures start with excellent office cultures, and QualityPro companies lead the pack in creating cultures of recognition and achievement.

### PROMOTING EMPLOYEE SUCCESS

Training certificates through QualityPro are an individual’s achievement, not a company’s, which is why they follow an individual throughout their career. In a very real sense, the individual achievements of your employees contribute to the achievements of a company. QualityPro’s training exams began as and remain an investment in the professionals that

make a company work, helping them develop professionally. While not a technological solution, the proof is evident in every QualityPro company that has received accreditation since 2004: if you show your pride in employees’ work, they will show it too.

This improvement compounds with each new training certificate an employee earns, proving that the more a company invests in an employee, the more that employee will feel invested in the work they do. We’ve seen study groups form at companies where employees who have already taken the exams have turned around to help others earn their own certificates, and then celebrate their peers’ achievements alongside the company. They understand the level of work and personal achievement, and want to pass that along to others to keep raising the bar. Look up certificates of completion at [NPMAQualityPro.org/certificate](http://NPMAQualityPro.org/certificate).

### LOOKING FORWARD

The steps taken to professionalize through QualityPro accreditation are based in a deep understanding of what it takes to be excellent in our industry, and that’s why they’ve stood the test of time. Our standards have helped companies of every size overcome challenges because while times and tools may change, principles and best practices do not. Technology presents new opportunities to make and maintain touchpoints with customers, but professionalism is eternal, and the tools a team uses can only get them so far if that team is not using proven principles that we’ve known work for years. □

*QualityPro is administered by the Foundation for Professional Pest Management, an independent organization that has been developing good business practices and standards since 2004. Designed specifically for pest management companies in the U.S. and Canada, we are proud to certify over 500 of the best companies in the pest management industry. QualityPro is endorsed by the National Pest Management Association (NPMA). For more information, contact us at [QualityPro@pestworld.org](mailto:QualityPro@pestworld.org).*



## ASK THE EXPERT

# Using Technology to Drive Growth

JOSEPH PASCARETTA, COO, WorkWave

**Q** What trends and emerging technology do you see impacting pest control operators?

**A** Pest control is an age-old vocation, but today's pest control operators can attest that there's plenty of room for technology in the mix. New tools and tech are entering the business all the time, and the vast majority enable businesses and their technicians to get more done in less time.

One example is the rise of the Internet of Things—in short, the way that smart devices interconnect and communicate. In pest control, this expanding web of interconnection enables the use of smart traps, sensors and monitoring devices. By providing technicians with real-time data on pest activity, smart traps and sensors allow pest control businesses to deploy resources more efficiently and provide more proactive strategies.

In the same vein, pest control companies can transform their operations by employing software to digitize data and streamline common tasks. From scheduling service and optimizing routes to customer relationship management (CRM) and billing, software tailored for the pest control industry enables more efficient operations and better-satisfied customers—not to mention how software that provides a mobile app can instantly connect technicians with smart traps and other innovative solutions to get even more done.

Additionally, today's PCOs have more access to data than ever before. By diving into datasets that pertain to environmental conditions, pest behavior and weather conditions, pest control businesses can anticipate trends and identify patterns in order to refine their strategies, anticipate customers' needs and even avoid excessive use of pesticides in many cases.

**Q** How do you approach business organization to enable accurate, actionable insights and reporting?

**A** Just like it's important to draw from available pest and environmental data, PCOs need to be able to glean insight from their own firsthand data.

Before you can connect the dots, though, you need to be able to access that data in a way that makes sense—no matter where it's coming from. This relies on interoperability between applications, from homegrown applications to cloud-based SaaS solutions to smart traps.

Pulling all of that information into an intelligent dashboard allows you to identify correlations and draw conclusions that you might not otherwise. This insight is enhanced


even further with data analytics and predictive modeling, which can help pest control operators anticipate pest outbreaks, track trends and optimize treatment strategies. Data is power, and being able to drill into that data puts PCOs in control of everything from labor costs to response times.

**Q** When analyzing reports, what KPIs should pest control companies focus on when they want to drive growth? When looking to be acquired?

**A** Needless to say, revenue growth is a fundamental indicator of a company's performance. Every pest control company should be tracking their revenue growth and aiming to keep it consistent year-over-year; consistency is crucial for sustainable growth, and it's certainly something buyers will be looking at if you're aiming to be acquired.

Customer retention indicates customer satisfaction and loyalty, which is crucial for sustained growth and attracting potential buyers. Whether retention looks great or leaves something to be desired, though, it's essential to ask *why* that number is where it is and identify what you're doing right and where you can stand to improve.

In addition to retention, PCOs should always be aware of their customer acquisition cost (CAC) and customer lifetime value (CLV). These figures factor heavily into your business's overall profitability. By analyzing these numbers, particularly alongside profit margins, PCOs can examine their marketing, sales and pricing from a better-informed perspective and continue moving in the right direction that allows their business to grow.

Be sure to consider service efficiency, as well. Tracking and analyzing service response times, completion rates, reasons for cancellations and service call durations allows PCOs to better understand the value of their services from a customer's perspective. Whether these numbers highlight operational effectiveness or shine a light on areas for improvement, the knowledge they provide is invaluable. 



**WOMEN'S FORUM**  
May 7-9, 2024  
*Atlanta, GA*

**WORKFORCE SUMMIT**  
May 9-10, 2024  
*Atlanta, GA*

**GLOBAL PUBLIC HEALTH &  
FOOD SAFETY SUMMIT**  
June 4-6, 2024  
*Miami Beach, FL*

**SAFETY SUMMIT**  
June 6-7, 2024  
*Miami Beach, FL*

**EXECUTIVE LEADERSHIP  
FORUM**  
June 11-13, 2024  
*New Orleans, LA*

**NPMA ACADEMY**  
July 16-18, 2024  
*Orlando, FL*

**CAROLINAS/MID-ATLANTIC  
SUMMER CONFERENCE**  
July 25-27, 2024  
*Myrtle Beach, SC*

**PESTWORLD 2024**  
Oct 22-25, 2024  
*Denver, CO*



**WHAT'S  
THE  
BUZZ?**

## GET TO KNOW PHIL THOMASON

**Phil Thomason**  
Vice President of Support Services  
Waynes Pest Control  
Birmingham, Alabama

### How did you get started in the industry?

I owned a commercial cleaning company for 11 years, sold it and reached out to a friend at Waynes to see if they had any opportunities. My first position was as a sales professional.

### Did you have any mentors along the way? Who, and how did they impact your career path?

Eric Frye, a former owner of Waynes, really walked along beside me to guide me through the pest industry. He always pushed me toward opportunities to help serve the customer and our team as a whole. As my career at Waynes progressed, Trey Strickland became someone I could bounce ideas off, use his knowledge and build processes together to strengthen our team. We called it "iron sharpening iron" as we both saw it as a chance to grow and serve others.

### What's the biggest learning experience you've had?

After working in sales, I moved into a role giving me a chance to put all of our policies and procedures on paper. We called it "The Waynes Way," which allowed me to learn a lot about the "Why, What and the How" we serve and the impact of our Shield's core values of Integrity, Courage, Perseverance and Character.

### What's the best piece of advice you've ever received?

Don't have any regrets. If an opportunity is in front of you, weigh the positives and negatives and make a decision to experience life, grow and become a better person.

### What's the worst piece of advice you've ever received?

To play it safe. You have to be bold and be a risk-taker at times.

### What's your secret talent?

There are so many...ha ha! Grilling wings, sports trivia, line dancing.



**What would your superpower be?**  
Teleportation—who wouldn't want to be anywhere in the snap of a finger?

**What was one of the best parties you've ever been to?**  
25 years ago, my friends and I rented a venue on Beale Street in Memphis for a New Year's Eve party. It was epic!

**Who would play you in the film of your life?**  
Vince Vaughn

**What life skill do you wish you had cultivated or were better at?**  
Public speaking. I am better than I used to be, but I would love to be more comfortable with speaking in public.

**What are you most excited about these days?**  
We just started a new wildlife service at Waynes. I'm excited to help get it started and see it grow to give our customers another reason to do business with us.

**What's the best compliment you've ever received?**  
Being told I am good at building processes, successfully implementing them and building a team.

**Describe yourself in three words?**  
Ambitious, creative, confident.

**What keeps you awake at night?**  
My brain doesn't stop working. I lie in bed thinking about all the things I have to do the next day.

**What is the most important lesson life has taught you?**  
Live life to the fullest and be kind to others.

**What was your most embarrassing moment?**  
When I was in Marine Corps boot camp, I couldn't stop laughing and a drill instructor was screaming in my face.

**What is your guiltiest pleasure?**  
Chocolate milkshakes.

**If you could learn to do anything, what would it be?**  
Become a pilot. If you can't teleport, then flying would be next.

**What's one thing you had to learn the hard way?**  
Hanging a light fixture with my pregnant wife without reading the instructions first.

**Describe your perfect day.**  
Hanging out with my family on a Caribbean beach.

**What is the weirdest way you've been injured?**  
Biting into an electrical cord when I was 2 years old. I got the shock of my life.

**What's your pet peeve?**  
Bad drivers.

**Which words or phrases do you most overuse?**  
100%.

**What entertainment are you bingeing right now?**  
True Detective on HBO.

**What's a book that has stuck with you?**  
The Bible.

**What's your favorite holiday?**  
Christmas Day. I enjoy seeing everyone's reaction to their gifts.

**Where was the best vacation you've ever taken?**  
My family and I took a road trip out west, going through Arizona, California, Nevada and Utah.

**And finally, what do you want to be when you grow up?**  
The best husband, father and friend I can be. Right now, I am a work in progress. ☺

## INDEX TO ADVERTISERS

BASF..... Outside Back Cover  
<https://pestcontrol.basf.us/>

Bell Laboratories, Inc.....5  
<https://www.belllabs.com/>

Purdue University.....15  
[www.tinyurl.com/5n7bv78r](http://www.tinyurl.com/5n7bv78r)

Veseris.....Inside Front Cover  
<https://veseris.com/>

PRESENTED BY



# GLOBAL PUBLIC HEALTH & FOOD SAFETY SUMMIT

EDEN ROC HOTEL | MIAMI, FLORIDA

## ENSURING A HEALTHIER, SAFER FUTURE FOR ALL!

Join us for the Global Public Health & Food Safety Summit, presented by the National Pest Management Association (NPMA), the Confederation of European Pest Management Associations (CEPA), and the Federation of Asian & Oceania Pest Managers Associations (FAOPMA).

The Summit brings together pest management professionals, public health officials, food safety specialists, researchers and more to share the latest advances in public health and food safety protection, best practices, and cutting-edge strategies for controlling pests that contaminate food and threaten public health. This event is dedicated to advancing the crucial mission of increasing food safety and reducing pest-borne disease through top-level training and networking with industry experts.

### WHO ATTENDS...

- Pest Control Operators
- Public Health Officials
- Vector Management Specialists
- Food Safety Professionals
- Researchers

### WHY ATTEND...

**NETWORKING:** Connect with industry leaders, suppliers, experts, and peers who share your commitment to public health and food safety.

**KNOWLEDGE SHARING AND COLLABORATION:** Gain insights into the latest research, best practices, and innovative approaches to address the crucial mission of safeguarding local communities and mitigating the adverse effects of pests on health, food, and property.

**PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT:** Elevate your skills and stay ahead in your field by learning from thought leaders and industry experts, and earning valuable recertification credits (US attendees only).



## REGISTER TODAY!

[www.NPMApestWorld.org/Food-Safety](http://www.NPMApestWorld.org/Food-Safety)

## HOTEL INFORMATION

### Eden Roc Miami Beach

4525 Collins Avenue, Miami Beach, FL 33140

Book your stay by **13 MAY, 2024** to take advantage of the \$279/night room rate, plus taxes and fees. After this date rooms are subject to availability.



**BASF**

We create chemistry

**Fendona® CS**  
Controlled Release Insecticide

## Serious perimeter pest control for mosquitos and occasional invaders

**Fendona® CS Controlled Release Insecticide** is the premier perimeter pest solution — and it means business. This fast-acting, rainfast formula is effective against a wide spectrum of arthropod pests, including spiders, mosquitos and scorpions. Its powerful active ingredient, alpha-cypermethrin, is four times more potent than regular cypermethrin and is protected by an advanced micro-mesh encapsulation technology that ensures lasting coverage.

For more information, visit [pestcontrol.basf.us](https://pestcontrol.basf.us) or contact your BASF representative.

**Always read and follow label directions.**

Fendona is a registered trademark of BASF. © 2023 BASF Corporation. All rights reserved.