

## Free Pest Control Information for Landlords, Letting and Estate Agents.

### **Pest Control in Rented Properties:**

We recognise from our own experience that co-ordinating pest control treatments in managed properties can be a difficult and complex issue. This is based on over 20 years' experience working with Local Authorities carrying out block treatments and delivering services utilising community engagement and partnership working.

SDK Environmental now trading under the Dial-A-Pest banner, has been providing domestic pest control services for Councils for many years and often find ourselves at the sharp end when it comes to dealing with tenanted properties.

To try and help demystify what can at first seem a complex process, to enable you to select a competent contractor and avoid the pitfalls, we have produced this fact sheet with some frequently asked questions and answers.

We hope you will find this information useful and informative and would ask that you provide us with your feedback on our Facebook page.



# Frequently Asked Questions

## Should we use Council provided pest services?

- Council rules on what they will permit to be treated as a “domestic pest treatment” at discounted rates varies widely from Council to Council.
- The dilemma is that if you contact the Local Council or it’s contractor on behalf of your tenants, or you seek to make payment on the tenant’s behalf, the treatment will then probably be regarded as commercial and the price could more than double that of the typical residential rate.
- This can often end up with Estate and Letting Agents or your Landlord Clients incurring significant additional treatment costs which could be legitimately avoided.
- “Domestic treatments” are usually limited to a single dwelling and its immediate curtilage and do not normally cover multi-property infestations, houses of multiple occupation or communal grounds.
- A good example of this would be a house with rats: instructed and paid for by the tenant would normally be charged at domestic rates but if the infestation is within a multi-dwelling property or in communal grounds such as a shared bin store facility then this would be normally be charged at commercial rates.

## Are Council Pest Services always the cheapest treatment option?

- Not anymore and certainly not for commercially rated treatments. It is worth obtaining alternative quotes from various Local Authorities and other contractors; the costs can be significant.

## Can we direct tenants to Council pest services where these are subsidised?

- Yes provided the treatment is ordered and paid for by the tenants and restricted to a single family occupancy dwelling.
- Many Councils provide free or further reduced charges for customers on receipt of qualifying benefits.

## Is it the Councils job to provide pest control to houses?

- Unfortunately not. It is ultimately the property or land owner’s legal responsibility to keep land and properties free from pests.
- Councils have statutory duties and responsibilities to investigate and ensure that certain pests are controlled and this can lead to the serving of enforcement notices under the Prevention of Damage by Pests Act. Legal action can be taken in cases where these notices are not complied with. To find out more please visit:

<http://www.defra.gov.uk/wildlife-pets/wildlife-management/controlling-pests/>



## **We require our tenants to pay for treatments themselves as part of their tenancy agreement. Can this go wrong?**

- Pest treatment responsibility can be delegated as part of the rental agreement and this is common place with Housing Association tenancies. This is a civil contractual agreement and ultimately the final legal responsibility remains with the property or land owner.
- If before or during a treatment your pest contractor discovers or suspects the pest infestation being treated has originated from neighbouring, linked or nearby properties or land, this should be communicated back to you as the Agent or Landlord for escalation to the local Environmental Services Department, such that an inspection and investigation can be undertaken, before the tenants treatment is completed and to minimise the risk of re-infestation, or the treatment being compromised.
- Occasionally tenants will be unwilling to carry out essential preparatory work at the property to maximise the success of treatment or they may refuse to leave the property for the required period during and after insecticide spraying. In the case of rat infestation tenants may decline to stop feeding the birds or clear up foodstuffs, may tamper or allow their children to tamper with bait stations and toxic products laid, all of which can compromise the service and or create unacceptable Health & Safety risks to themselves, others and the environment. In such cases treatment cannot take place or must be suspended and your contractor should advise you accordingly.

## **When would managing agents or landlords be responsible for arranging treatment and have to meet the cost?**

- Any existing pest problem present prior to a new tenancy should be resolved at the Landlords expense.
- Where an infestation of a pest is reported shortly after a new tenant takes up occupancy, even if the property has been empty for a period of time, it is best practice to arrange for an urgent written site survey. The survey should confirm the property status and ascertain the likelihood of the alleged infestation being present prior to the new tenancy. Cat fleas can be a common problem, as can bed bugs especially in furnished properties.
- Where it is known or identified at survey that a reported pest infestation is identified with the rental property and its immediate curtilage, but within a managed site, the responsibility and treatment cost would then rest with the site management company, who should be advised that action is required.

## **Why are Bed Bugs and Fleas such a problem?**

There are many myths about flea and bed bug treatments.

- In short, where a single property is correctly prepared for insecticide spraying and post treatment instructions correctly followed, successful treatment should not present a problem.
- Difficulty in eradicating these pests is most prevalent in houses or properties that have multiple tenants, especially where housekeeping is poor and unless the whole property is thoroughly treated there is a high risk of failure.
- Most contractors will charge per room treated, or per occupied unit at commercial rates and are unlikely to offer a warranty.

## **What if the problem comes back or never goes away?**

- Always check your selected contractor's or Council's terms and conditions before instructing works. Professional companies should offer some form of written guarantee or warranty. To view ours please visit

<http://www.dialapest.co.uk/terms-conditions.php>



## What can go wrong and what legislation covers all this?

- There are always risks where rodenticides and insecticides are laid or applied and there is an associated 'duty of care' applicable to all involved to ensure reasonable and practical checks have been made to safeguard customers, third parties and the environment.
- You have an obligation under your duty of care to select a competent service provider and carry out reasonable background checks. Visit this link before choosing a contractor

[http://www.direct.gov.uk/en/HomeAndCommunity/InYourHome/PestAndWeedControl/DG\\_10026663](http://www.direct.gov.uk/en/HomeAndCommunity/InYourHome/PestAndWeedControl/DG_10026663)

## What additional action should we take to assist tenants with special needs?

- The U.K. is a multi-cultural and diverse society and you should already be aware of the demographic make-up of your customer base.
- You should ensure that your selected contractor can provide all customers access to treatment information and safety precautions appropriate to and in a manner that meets their needs, which may require document translation facilities into multiple languages.
- Tenants with physical disabilities may require additional assistance.

## What other checks should we make as a minimum before we engage or recommend a Pest contractor?

- Do they belong to a Professional Body that has a code of practice?
- Do they have safe systems of work and have these been verified?
- Have we checked copies of their Public and Employers Liability Insurance?
- Do they have accreditation for Customer Service and Quality systems?
- Do they practise Lawful Trading and has this been checked or certified?

## What about Protection of Children and Vulnerable Adults?

- You should ensure that any contractor you use or recommend has a valid Protection of Children and Vulnerable Adults Policy.
- That all their operational staff have been security vetted.

## What about Data Protection?

- Your contractor should be registered with the Data Protection Agency.
- You do need to ensure legally compliant systems and agree how you will transmit and exchange customer's private information securely with your contractor, who should provide you with a copy of their Information Security Policy and contact details for their nominated Data Security Officer.
- If your contractor takes credit/debit cards from you or your tenants for security reasons they need to be certified as PCI-DSS Compliant.

## Why is this important?

- Legal compliance and the compensation culture is rife, if you chose us as a contractor you need not worry as we have proven systems and procedures in place which have been externally accredited to provide protection for you, the client and the end customer.

