



site. Currently, this is a practice only undertaken for rodent control, but realistically can (and should) be applied to any control programme.

Document all animals evidenced on and around the site, and rationalise how they might be affected by any future treatments.

Consider the speed with which treatments need to be undertaken, as pests may well have significant impacts on the environment themselves. Weigh up whether it would be better to engage with an intense yet brief control strategy, or is there freedom to allow for a more sedate or sustained approach?

Ultimately, there must always be a balance between having the maximum impact, for the minimal cost.

Step One should focus on identifying pests and establishing boundaries

The information gleaned from step one can be used in direct conjunction with the environmental risks outlined in Step Two. The interplay between these two observations will tell you on the risk hierarchy what is the minimal effective position when controlling an active population, as well as limiting what the maximum level of risk should be with our choice in tools and strategy.

STEP THREE: DETERMINE

Implement the appropriate response, tactics and strategy

A strategy should not be thought of as a single action or process, but as a series of tactics stacked together allowing the benefits of each to support the weaknesses of the others.

By applying a process of overlapping escalating tactics, any strategy can be given the best chance at both short-term control and long-term management.

Information generated from Step One and Two can be used to devise these tactics and break them down into discrete phases that can be implemented. It is important to note that, although a strategy might apply to an entire site, the tactics for control may vary significantly from area to area around the site.

Escalation to chemical intervention may be prudent early on, on one section of the site, but on another, the same results might be achieved with the use of traps or other physical control methods.

At this point, as well as using your risk matrix to both determine intervention limits and site boundaries, it can be used for a third critical function: to determine the visit frequencies required to ensure your continued command over the site.

STEP FOUR: EVALUATE

Demonstrate success (or failure) through monitoring and continual assessment

Winston Churchill once said, "However beautiful the strategy, you should occasionally look at the results".

This is particularly true when dealing with pests. Many a job has been lost due to a strategy failing to deliver the desired results, and some jobs have even been lost when a strategy was so effective that the teams implementing it were then deemed unnecessary because "there are no more pests".

In both cases, a programme of monitoring and assessment can be the answer.

Monitoring and assessment can serve three primary functions:

- ◆ Non-toxic monitoring can act as an early warning system, allowing for a reduction in time

Do not give up or withdraw from the process if success is not immediate

to action, providing the opportunity for a swift response to early infestations.

- ◆ Active assessment of ongoing treatments allows the PMO to gauge which tactics have provided greatest impacts and those that have had the least impact, so that in future infestations these tactics can be better utilised or modified.

- ◆ Finally, continual assessment over the year gives an element of future-proofing sites, preparing for seasonal trends in pest ingress. Additionally, it gives a metric by which to demonstrate success, showing how that month on month, or year on year, the effects of the PMO teams are maintaining a site that is kept within those user defined and agreed levels of risk and acceptability.

DEALING WITH UNCERTAINTY

That's right, there's even risk in your assumption of risk. Much of this strategy building will be in part a subjective series of observations being placed into an inherently objective framework, therefore there needs to be an element of leeway applied.

When devising risk-based strategies, remember to give breathing space to allow for the dynamic nature of both pests and our detection of them. Do not give up or withdraw from the process if success is not immediate, instead use this feedback to modify and augment your strategy and its development. With each revision and update, this basic model will adapt to your style and skill sets, becoming more robust, reliable and personalised with each refinement.