

US EPA ARCHIVE DOCUMENT

# Feed the Kids, Not the Pests: Effective IPM for Cafeterias and Kitchens

## Questions and Answers

*Feed the Kids, Not the Pests: Effective IPM for Cafeterias and Kitchens*, one of a series of [school Integrated Pest Management \(IPM\) webinars](#) hosted by EPA's Center of Expertise for School IPM, was presented on March 14, 2017. Included here is information on the presenters and responses to participants' questions.

### On this page:

- Speakers
- Questions and Answers

### Speakers

- Allison Allen, National Pest Management Association
- Karey Windbiel-Rojas, University of California
- Mark Hardin, Howard County (Maryland) Public School System

### Questions and Answers

*The questions below were posed by webinar participants. The responses may have been refined following the webinar for clarification or to include additional resources.*

**1. My pest control company wants us to install insect light traps in our kitchens. Is this an effective way to solve fly problems?**

(K. Windbiel) Light traps are good for monitoring and also catching some flies, but without fixing the breeding habitat by minimizing the build-up of organic matter, traps alone will not solve the problem. Traps are only one small aspect of fly control. Cleaning drains, removing breeding sites, and identifying and removing their food sources are keys to their elimination.

(A. Allen) Insect light traps are helpful as part of your control strategy, but make sure they are properly placed so that they are not attracting flies to the food prep or serving areas. Having monitors, which is what light traps are for flies, is important to inform you about pest problems before they grow and spread. Once you have identified any flies caught with the light trap, focus on kitchen sanitation in areas where those kinds of flies might be breeding. Or, if you're catching a lot of species that are normally found outside, there may be a door being left open or a window that needs a screen.

**2. How often should kitchen and custodial staff inspect for pests in between visits by the pest control company?**

(A. Allen) Train the kitchen and custodial staff to think about pest management as they go through their daily routines, especially cleaning routines. When they are near an insect monitor – they can take a peek. If there are pests in the monitor, they should let the pest management professional know. The goal is early detection and rapid response. To maximize the opportunities for communication between staff and your pest management professional and to track trends, have a log or some other way of documenting pest sightings. Looking for pests does not need to be a separate task from what the staff is already doing – they just need to be more aware. The staff should think like a pest and think about the implications of their actions on pest management in everything they do.

**3. What should we do about yellow jackets around our dumpsters that force the kitchen staff to throw trash bags into the dumpsters from a distance, causing the bags to split?**

(M. Hardin) The root problem is the availability of food in the dumpsters to the yellow jackets. First, make sure your trash cans and dumpsters are clean. Have your refuse company exchange the dirty cans/dumpsters for clean ones or clean them yourself on a regular schedule. Next, make sure the trash bags stay closed by instructing the staff not to overstuff the bags, to double bag the trash, or to switch a stronger bag brand. Third, if you can determine the direction that the yellow jackets are come from, you can place yellow jacket traps along their flight path (but away from the dumpsters) to capture them. The final step is to locate and remove the nest.

**4. Do you work closely with your local health department in implementing your IPM strategy?**

(K. Windbiel) In California, the California Department of Pesticide Regulation manages the state's mandated school IPM program and works with the local health departments.

**5. Where should we place fruit fly sticky traps in the kitchen where would they be effective and out of the way?**

(K. Windbiel) They should be placed near food storage and preparation areas. They do not need to be placed all over the kitchen. If you find adults in the traps, you should inspect further to identify their source.

**6. I understand about installing door sweeps under outer doors to keep pests out. But what is a practical solution to close the gap between two exterior doors?**

(A. Allen) The space between doors is called an astragal. There are sealant options for the space between doors. The space is described in the ['Pest Prevention by Design'](#) guidelines. This manual points to some of the specific product recommendations for pest exclusion around and between doors.

(M. Hardin) There are 'L' shaped door sweeps that help seal the gaps between doors with the same material that is used under the door. Because rubber sweeps tend to bend, wear-out, and can be chewed through by rodents, we should be using brush-type door sweeps in schools. Using a brush sweep can eliminate part of that center area with an 'L' shaped brace. There are also designs for middle-hinge double doors that can be very difficult to seal.

**7. How do we know if the air curtains installed on our exterior doors are working properly?**

(K. Windbiel) If you are having continual fly or other flying pest invaders, the curtains may not be working and should be inspected. You may need to consider a different type of air screen. If you are not having fly or other pest problems, they are working properly.

**8. We have been told that pouring bleach down the floor drain will control drain flies, but after listening to your talk, it sounds like the drains should be cleaned and not sanitized. Is that correct?**

(A. Allen) Yes. Make sure those drains get cleaned. There is a difference between cleaning and sanitization. Get in there and remove the gunk.

(K. Windbiel) Absolutely. Bleach does not breakdown the built-up gunk in the drain. Bleach might kill some of the larvae and it might flush down some of the gunk, but there is still a lot of organic matter that bleach will not break-down. Cleaning and scrubbing is needed.

**9. How often do you inspect and monitor the kitchen and food service area?**

(M. Hardin) We have a contractor that inspects the pest monitors that they place at least monthly. We also have an indoor air quality program where staff are inspecting once a month. So our pest monitors are inspected roughly every two weeks.

Because people see those monitors daily, they should report when they see something. It is a training issue to make sure the staff knows what to report, who to report it to and that information gets back to you. The quicker it happens, the better you can solve the pest problem.

**10. Is there something we can apply to kill fruit flies that constantly hang around the kitchen sinks?**

(K. Windbiel) I would discourage any spraying for fruit flies. The fruit flies are there because there is a food source. So getting rid of the material that is attracting the fruit flies is the best way to go. Fly traps would be helpful to monitor the problem. In some cases, a pest management professional may make an application to knock-down adult flies. However, any pesticide applications in a school should be done by a pest management professional.

(A. Allen) Fruit flies are not very good at battling wind. While being considerate of food contamination risks, consider using a vacuum cleaner to suck them up instead of spraying and put in a fan to blow a light breeze that will help keep the flies away. Spraying or vacuuming are temporary fixes. You need to get to the source of why they are there.

**11. How do fruit flies and phorid flies get into the kitchens?**

(K. Windbiel) Fruit flies are attracted to the fermentation of over-ripe fruit. Adults can fly in through vents or open doors and windows. Fruit flies can also be introduced into kitchens as eggs or larvae on incoming produce. Once there is a food source or good breeding site available, they will continue to build in number until their food and harborage sources are removed. Phorid flies also fly in through vents and open doors. They are attracted to organic material and breed in garbage cans, dumpsters, drains, and sewer pipes.

(A. Allen) Phorid flies often result from a broken pipe that is out of sight and out of mind. It is important for your building to find the source of these flies. You know you're at the source when you find maggots (fly larvae). I've heard of cases where solving the phorid fly problem took going through cement to get to broken sewer lines.

**12. Have you had issues with health inspectors concerned with monitoring stations in kitchen food prep areas?**

(M. Hardin) Occasionally, we have inspectors find a monitoring trap containing an insect. Because we have a state requirement for IPM in our schools, the inspectors know that we will go through our routine to find the source of the pest problem and eliminate it. The health department requires our IPM contractor or staff to inspect and provide them a report. That has been sufficient to keep them from writing us up for pests in the kitchens.

**13. Are there low-cost, non-pesticidal ways to prevent stored food pests?**

(A. Allen). Because there are so many opportunities for standard products to become infested, prevention is key. Stored product pests like Indian meal moths, are just super machines at devouring food sources and finding breeding sites. Think about the food delivery truck sitting outside the school, waiting to be unloaded. Pests could be trying to get into food in the truck. There are so many opportunities for insect infestation like in grain storage facilities, food processing plants, food storage warehouses, and delivery trucks, that it is hard to truly have complete prevention. Use monitors, including pheromone traps, in food storage areas. Train the staff that unload food deliveries and maintain inventory in your facility to keep an eye out for pests and their damage so they can intercept infested items. Be vigilant and inspect continually. In addition to your staff's inspection, ask your pest management professional how pheromones could be used in the management of stored product pests in your facility.

**14. Can you suggest a simple monitor for identifying if we have drain flies?**

(K. Windbiel) Inverting a clear plastic cup or placing an insect monitor (sticky-side-down) over drains overnight is a simple way to identify the source of flies. Cups or traps containing flies in the morning indicate the drains that need immediate cleaning.

**15. Mouse droppings often accumulate beneath and within equipment and serve as the basis for health department violations. Who should clean these areas, and how often should they be cleaned?**

(K. Windbiel) We have a similar issue with drain cleaning. Should the plumbers, kitchen staff, or IPM staff clean the drains? It's up to you to decide who to assign this task. All are capable of doing the work, so review contracts and job descriptions to see whose responsibility it is. That being said, this type of work is considered sanitation, rather than pest control, in our system. So, the responsibility falls on the custodial or kitchen staff, who would again have to determine between them who was responsible. The important thing is to make it someone's assigned duty.

(A. Allen) There are specific recommendations for how to clean up rodent droppings. Anyone doing this work should review CDC's guidance on [cleaning up after rodents](#).

**16. Are borescopes practical to use in schools to look into drains and difficult to reach areas?**

(K. Windbiel) They are practical if you can afford them and have personnel trained to use them.

(A. Allen) Use whatever tool you need to make thorough inspections. Even a smartphone on a selfie stick can be used to take a picture to see what is going on behind equipment and in hard to see areas.