

# BRUSH UP ON PEST MANAGEMENT ACTIVITIES THIS WINTER

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## McCloud Services recommends businesses maintain pest control tactics throughout the winter months

Winter can mean a slight reprieve from many of our structural pests. Insects are cold blooded and therefore are not capable of sufficiently regulating their body temperatures during the cold winter months. Although they have biological mechanisms for survival, they are not as active or aggressively multiplying during the cold. Even in heated structures, there are certain environmental factors, such as reduced humidity, that will drive down insect numbers. This is one of the reasons pests like fleas and small Drosophila flies complaints are reduced in the winter despite conducive indoor temperatures. In addition, external pressures from migrating outdoor insects are certainly lessened. Unfortunately, this does not apply to warm blooded pests such as commensal rodents, and rodent populations can continue to breed and migrate indoors from the exterior.



*Drosophila Flies*



So, what activities can be taken during this time of reduced pest activity? To start, it can be an excellent time to review the overall pest management program. Trending and tracking reports for the previous year should be reviewed and determinations made regarding additional program changes. It may mean new equipment is needed or existing equipment should be removed. Consumer complaint data and analysis should also be part of the assessment in addition to the records that are maintained by the pest management staff. An assessment of all equipment should be made including insect light traps, pheromone traps and rodent equipment. Additional services may also be suggested based on the trend reports such as web removal, additional exterior perimeter treatments or pheromone mating disruption programs based on the pest pressures. Analyze what is needed and what is not and shift the resources to optimize the program.



Pest proofing is another activity that can be done over the winter. It can be a good time to prepare for spring pest influxes by making sure that structural integrity is maximized. It will also help with reducing any rodent entry points with immediate benefit. Common pest proofing products that can be helpful in these activities include the use of stainless steel rodent proofing meshes, door sweeps dock plate seal replacements and sealants. Since rodent activity can occur year round, rodent proofing efforts are important during every season. Mice can fit into an opening the size of a dime or 1/4" gap. Seal to this level. Ants are traditionally one of the first pests to enter in early spring. Pest proofing to exclude ants should be a late winter goal. Expansion joints and other cracks in the slab can be a common entry point for one common ant, the pavement ant.

*Exterior Inspection and Pest Proofing*



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Sealing exterior entry points around pipe/wall junctures and other wall and floor penetrations advised for general ant prevention. Since sealants vary widely in use patterns depending on type of area to be sealed, it is best to consult your sealant supplier for recommendations. Foam sealants are generally not recommended for food facilities unless used for backing or supporting other type of sealants for large voids or openings.

Some pests will take advantage of our structures to survive the cold. There is a group of pests we call the fall invaders who enter structures in the fall and can periodically emerge from wall voids, attics and false ceiling spaces during the winter and into the occupied areas of buildings. These are one of the few unique pest groups which are a true winter season issue. Examples of these fall invaders include cluster flies, Multicolored Asian lady beetles, brown marmorated stink bugs and box elder bugs. Their winter appearance typically occurs when we have January thaw conditions and the outside temperature rises on a nice sunny day. The insects interpret the climate change as spring and emerge from their winter retreats. They are light attracted and may be seen on window sills or around light fixtures. We also see some increased activity on shipments of incoming goods in the winter in warehousing and distribution centers. Although they are not considered a major pest, they are a nuisance and in sensitive environments like food plants they are a food safety concern. One of the best strategies to deal with these pests is to vacuum them up especially when they are congregating along windows and lights. Insect light traps can also be used and are advised particularly in sensitive environments and or if populations are large. If the interior areas where they are emerging from can be identified, sealing should be considered where feasible.

Use the winter lull from high pest pressures to plan and prepare for spring. Pest management is an important part of food safety in which pest prevention continues to increase in importance.

## Fall Invaders



*Asian Lady Beetle*



*Brown Marmorated Stink Bug*



*Boxelder Bug*



*Cluster Fly*

## About McCloud Services

McCloud Services, based in South Elgin, Ill., is the leader in food protection services throughout the chain of custody – from grain elevator to grocery store. McCloud Services is known for its integrated approach to pest management, specifically designed for the food supply chain of custody. Serving the largest food-related brands in the U.S., the company has earned a reputation as the “food protection experts.” McCloud Services has locations in 11 states with nine service centers. For more information, please visit: [www.mccloudservices.com](http://www.mccloudservices.com).