



ASK THE EXPERT

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Documenting Pest Control

How can proper pest control documentation improve my audit score?

Let's face it, few things are worse than waiting for the food-safety auditor to complete an inspection. But knowing you've provided your auditor with detailed documentation, especially of all pest management activities, can help you breathe easier. The truth is facilities with accurate and comprehensive documentation routinely score better than those without it.

Why is pest control documentation so important? Because pests are serious food safety threats, and auditors have no tolerance for them in food processing environments. The pest control evaluation is heavily weighted for this reason – in fact, it can account for as much as 20 per cent of the total audit score.

With regard to documentation, your auditor is looking for a detailed, written account of the facility's pest management programs. Specifically, the documentation must include three items: copies of all service records, labels and material safety data sheets (MSDS).

The Service Record – A Cornerstone Document

The service record is the most extensive component of the required documentation. It describes in detail every visit by the pest management professional to your facility. After each visit, you should receive a report of all activities performed at the facility including any pests found, reasons for the findings and steps taken to eliminate the pests.

In addition, the service record should contain the names of any pesticide products used, the quantity applied, the method of application, the type of equipment used and the site of application. The technician should also note whether the treatment was performed reactively to treat an existing pest problem or proactively to prevent future pest infestations.

Common Mistakes and How to Avoid Them

The best way to avoid even the smallest deduction is to make sure you have an open line of communication with your pest management professional. Trained professionals will go the extra mile to address two of the most common mistakes that alert auditors to potential problems. One



such problem relates to making sure the products used for treatment match up with the targeted pest. For example, the service record will send a red flag to the auditor if it shows that a product designed to treat ants was used in response to a cockroach problem. Experienced technicians not only use the correct products to treat the pests, but they also accurately document this information and review it with customers before every audit.

Another potential deduction can occur if product registration numbers are not up to date. The Pest Management Regulatory Agency researches and assigns registration numbers to all approved pest control products. Deductions can occur if the registration numbers have expired or if the products are not registered for use in Canada. To avoid letting a careless mistake cause a costly deduction, use the PMRA's online system ELSE (Electronic Labels: Search & Evaluation) to double-check your products' registration numbers.

The Key to Pest Control Audit Success – The Logbook

With all your other responsibilities, the pest control documentation process might appear too time-consuming to manage, but it does not need to be. To guarantee that your facility is always ready for an audit, keep an organized logbook with all the documentation needed for an audit on site and work with your pest management professional to frequently update the book. In fact, most pest management providers will supply, maintain and educate customers on the importance of such a logbook. Regardless of whether you contract pest management or have in-house service, the logbook needs to be easily accessible to and regularly updated by a professional.

The bottom line is your pest control documentation must be detailed and accurate in order to improve your audit scores. Pests may be a threat to your facility, but with proper documentation, there is no reason for them to be a threat to your audit score.

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