

A Silver Lining Playbook for Managing Bed Bugs

PMPs are happily discovering they can make more money on bed bug work by incorporating **ActiveGuard®** Mattress Liners into their control strategies.

Like most pest management professionals, Bill Hastings of Rose Pest Solutions in Chicago has quite a few sales representatives calling on him or dropping off product samples that he is told work better at eliminating pests than the products he is currently using. From cockroaches to rodents there is always, excuse the pun, a “better mousetrap” for PMPs to use.

The widespread presence of bed bug activity in the United States has done nothing to stem the tide of new product introductions and, in fact, has created an entirely new category of suppliers offering the “latest and greatest” solutions to preventing or eliminating bed bugs.

Why are there so many products for just one pest? It is likely attributable to the difficulty the industry has experienced in attempting to eradicate bed bugs — 76% of PMPs responding to a 2013 National Pest Management Association and University of Kentucky survey indicated that bed bugs were the most difficult pest to control — illustrating the lack of a single “go-to” product. “So many bed bug products have come across my desk that I have lost count,” says Hastings. “Some are a flash in the pan so I look at them with a cautious eye.”

When the local sales representative for Allergy Technologies, manufacturer of **ActiveGuard®** Mattress Liners, dropped off samples of the liners last fall, Hastings’ initial impression was that the product’s concept was solid and warranted a further look. He then rolled up his sleeves and spent the next few weeks researching the product and letting his technicians kick the tires.

“After we put the mattress liners out in the field we saw our callback percentage go down almost immediately,” says Hastings, who installs the permethrin-impregnated liners following both conventional and thermal remediation treatments.

Following a thermal remediation treatment, Hastings says, they usually see a 97% success rate but after they started installing the liners the success rate went up to 100%. With that type of result it is easy to see why **ActiveGuard** Mattress Liners are now part of Rose Pest Solutions’ bed bug protocol. “We reviewed 25 bed bug treatments and only one had live bed bugs present following the heat treatment and mattress liners being installed and that was because the customer took off the liner,” says Hastings. Rose technicians install the active liners on the bottom of the box spring near the dust cover where bed bug activity is usually the heaviest. Hastings says the placement of the liner may



▶ **ActiveGuard** Mattress Liners can be installed quickly and easily, providing two years of proven protection for PMPs and customers alike. The permethrin-impregnated mattress liners feature proven performance and a new user-friendly label.

sound unorthodox but that the results have been consistently good. “The headboard and bed rails are prime areas for bed bugs and we want to get the active liner as close to the areas of high bed bug activity as possible. Installing the liners on the bottom of the box spring allows us to do that.”

He says the company’s technicians were used to working with full mattress encasements and find **ActiveGuard** easier to install and more durable with fewer rips and tears. In fact, these liners work even if torn as they are not meant to encase but actually kill bed bugs as a result of contact.

Another significant advantage the **ActiveGuard** Mattress Liners offer is around-the-clock bed bug elimination for up to two years. Bed bugs coming into contact with the permethrin-impregnated liners usually die within 72 hours. “We know that the **ActiveGuard** liners are protecting our customers even when we aren’t there and are not just repelling the bed bugs,” says Hastings.

The liners also provide Rose with a minimal chemical bed bug service to market to customers who do not want a more traditional widespread chemical treatment performed in their home or business. “Certain customer segments simply do not



Driving Revenue with *ActiveGuard*® Mattress Liners

Anytime a new product or service is presented to PMPs as the “next big thing” the first question they ask after determining if the product works as advertised is, “How can I make money with this product?” To help PMPs answer this question, *ActiveGuard*® Mattress Liners offers the following revenue-generating and cost-saving tips:

- Reduces callbacks and the easy-to-perform, one-technician installation saves time and labor costs.
- Can be used in conjunction with mattress encasements – increasing sales to customers, especially in the hospitality and healthcare industries.
- Creates an opportunity to extend your bed bug service program’s guarantee period.
- Reduces the incidence of re-infestations due to rips and tears that are common with encasements. *ActiveGuard* works continuously even if torn or ripped.
- Lower inventory costs, four *ActiveGuard* SKU’s cover 99% of available beds. Carrying only four SKUs on service vehicle allows for installation at the initial service, saving the cost of returning while increasing initial treatment effectiveness.
- Two-year residual sales cycle establishes a renewable income stream.
- Creates an opportunity to market dust mite abatement programs.
- You can incorporate the liners as part of your preventative bed bug services and increase the value of the program.



▶ *ActiveGuard* Mattress Liners kill bed bugs 24/7 continuously for two years.

want a multitude of chemicals used in their treatments and these liners allow us to provide protection by using a low-dose formulation,” says Hastings.

Hastings says it is important to set proper expectations with customers about how the liners work and the role they play as part of a larger integrated bed bug control program. “They need to know that the liner will not kill bed bugs immediately like a typical chemical or heat treatment will,” says Hastings, referring to the fact that *ActiveGuard* is not a frontline tool. “It will do its job and do it well in protecting them from those bed bugs that are missed during treatment, but don’t expect to see dead bed bugs 20 minutes following the installation.”

OPENING NEW DOORS

While bed bugs are most prevalent in single-family homes and apartment/condominium complexes, their presence is certainly felt in a variety of high-profile commercial accounts including hotels, college dormitories, healthcare facilities and office buildings.

Hastings has found success using *ActiveGuard* liners in commercial accounts because of the product’s value as both an effective preventative and control tool. He points to a 300-bed assisted living facility that Rose’s technicians were visiting on a daily basis due to high-volume bed bug activity. “We installed them in a few rooms as a test and had very positive response,” says Hastings. “The results were so good that the facility management had the liners installed in every unit as a preventative measure.”

Marketing preventative bed bug services to customers is an unchecked box on some PMPs “to-do” list mainly due to customer apprehension for paying for such services or the lack of the right product/service lineup to get the job done. After making *ActiveGuard* Mattress Liners part of Rose’s bed bug service protocols, Hastings was able to put together a preventative bed bug package for both residential and commercial customers. The package includes a thorough initial inspection (Rose uses both human and canine inspectors), installation of these active liners and ClimbUp® traps, and monthly inspections thereafter to monitor for bed bug activity.

Rose has been marketing its preventative bed bug services since December 2013 and the initial results are promising. The program also has provided property or facility managers with a tool to better manage their pest control services budget. “With a preventative program in place a property or facility manager knows what they will be paying up front,” says Hastings. “And with the *ActiveGuard* liners as part of the program they receive peace of mind that there is continual bed bug prevention and elimination being performed.”

DELIVERING PEACE OF MIND

Bed bugs are a very personal pest for customers. Whether it is a homeowner in the suburbs, an apartment renter in the city or the manager of a five-star hotel, there is a certain stigma attached to having bed bugs. Customers want them gone immediately and they don’t want them to come back. That’s why PMPs who are able to deliver effective preventative and elimination solutions to this wide range of customers are finding success. And having *ActiveGuard* Mattress Liners as part of your bed bug service protocol is one important element to that successful recipe.

“Why wouldn’t you want a product in your toolbox that helps you control bed bugs even when you are not there,” says Hastings. “We used to get calls a few weeks after a treatment from the customer that there are still bed bugs, but after using *ActiveGuard* liners we aren’t getting those calls anymore.”



Visit Our New Website

Looking for more information on *ActiveGuard* Mattress Liners? PMPs can visit Allergy Technologies’ website — www.allergytechnologies.com — and download a wealth of information including technical data, install instructions, time-lapse photography on how the product works and tips on how to market the product to customers. The state-of-the-art website also provides a list of pest control distributors that carry the liners.

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