

5 QUESTIONS

By Heather Gooch | Editor

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5 questions with Joseph Latino

During the National Pest Management Association's PestWorld meeting in Baltimore in October, Latino, president of Allergy Technologies LLC, convened the "Bed Bug Prevention Think Tank," a gathering for an honest, industry-wide discussion of creating guidelines for a proactive bed bug management program. This approach would be a sea change from the industry's current common model of reactive bed bug management and follow-up inspections, but Latino says he believes that there's ample opportunity for this program to become a success.

1 How would you characterize the goals for the Bed Bug Prevention Think Tank?

The Think Tank was intended to actively seek involvement from a cross-section of the industry's top manufacturers, distributors, research entomologists, major service providers, legal counselors, regulatory experts, and media to discuss an integrated, low environmental-impact approach to bed bug prevention that embraces encasements, insecticides, interceptors and active mattress liners. As a generic program under development, it focuses on "classes of products" rather than specific examples, and is slated to have a warranty/guarantee component,

including a contract for pest management professionals (PMPs).

While it is assumed that every product class chosen performs as labeled, we are considering developing a mock field study model, mimicking a hotel guestroom, with *PMP* Hall of Famer Dr. Phil Koehler, of the University of Florida. We hope to provide data supporting the efficacy of the program, while providing insights for improvement.

The program is intended to embrace all facets of the industry relevant to long-term residual products. It must embrace the concepts taught under integrated pest management (IPM), and be highly compatible with continuous human exposure.

2 At the conclusion of the meeting, you were able to gain a number of volunteers for a working party group to hash out more details about what the program should be. (Editor's Note: See box below for the list of members.) What are their next steps as a group?

The Working Party will provide to participants of the Bed Bug Prevention Think Tank, program updates as they develop, for comments and suggestions. We are quite appreciative that these individuals have agreed to work in collaboration to

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BED BUG THINK TANK WORKING PARTY PARTICIPANTS

- Dr. Jim Ballard, President, Ballard Consulting
- Eric Braun, BCE, Bed Bug Line Manager, Rentokil Steritech
- Gail Getty, BCE, President, Getty Entomological Research & Consulting
- William Hastings, Director of Specialty Services, Rose Pest Solutions
- Dr. Susan Jones, Professor of Entomology, The Ohio State University
- Andrea Hancock, Vice President, Mattress Safe
- Dr. Phil Koehler, Professor of Entomology, University of Florida
- Joseph Latino, President, Allergy Technologies LLC
- Jeff Lipman, Attorney-At-Law, Lipman Law Firm
- Dr. Michael Potter, Professor of Entomology, University of Kentucky
- Tim Wong, Technical Director, M&M Environmental



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assess the financial and reputational impact of bed bugs specific to a vertical — in particular, the hospitality, multi-occupant dwelling and assisted-living markets. In addition, to develop specific programs tailored to the financial wherewithal of each vertical, and create financial models for both service provider and client that provide a clear and tangible return on investment (ROI).

3 You've noted that the Think Tank earmarked 2018 as the "Year for Bed Bug Prevention." What are some of the plans in the works for the year ahead?

In addition to finalizing the draft program in the early stages of 2018, we anticipate implementing the program with a number of key pest management providers. We also plan to develop a guestroom model study to optimize efficacy, as mentioned previously.

Administratively, we will establish presentations to federal, regional and state housing authorities; assisted living organizations; and brand hotel corporate leaders to increase awareness of the efficacy, time and cost efficiency of adopting a bed bug prevention program. These verticals have been mired in strategic approaches that are dated, reactive and frankly, have not changed the landscape of bed bugs for years.

4 Is there concern that one manufacturer or product will outshine others as study and group discussion results accrue?

We are going into this process with the notion that 'the whole is greater than the sum of the parts,' and that the program's efficacy relies upon a synergy among the various component elements. No one manufacturer or product will be highlighted; rather, program recommendations are to be based on product class.

The mindset underlying this program is that there has yet to be a unified approach to bed bug prevention that is widely accepted. Distribution and manufacturing play key roles, as certain financial concessions will likely be required to allow for the program's upfront installation costs to be amortized over months, thereby allowing service providers the opportunity to recoup initial costs.

5 How will the program be distributed and implemented?

The end deliverable of this program is envisioned to be a comprehensive program packet including all of the elements described above. It will not be proprietary, but offered freely to all PMPs interested in bed bug prevention as a strategy to alleviate the financial and reputational burdens associated with reactive, remediative bed bug treatment.

Based on the past decade of bed bug-related occurrence/treatment data nationwide, it is obvious that remediative approaches have not been successful in stemming the tide of bed bugs — and more likely, has worsened the problem because of short-sighted, case-by-case treatment approaches. While at the outset, it is likely that there will be a corps of pest management firms that will implement this preventive program, its success will drive the balance of the industry to adopt a preventive stance that is efficacious, cost- and time-effective. It can be a major step forward in abating the bed bug pandemic. PMP

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