

How to Hire a Pest Control Operator for Bed Bugs

A Fact Sheet by the Midwest Pesticide Action Center



Call several companies. Introduce yourself and explain your interest in safer, more effective bed bug control through Integrated Pest Management.

It is important to shop around – not all pest control companies are the same; make sure you spend the time to find the right company.

Don't just go with the lowest bid - hire a company that can truly treat the problem. This may not mean the company that is the cheapest, but it will save you time and even money by treating properly the first time.

When you call ask the following questions:

1) Do you offer an Integrated Pest Management (IPM) option and follow National Pest Management Association's Best Practices?

For example:

- Inspection, including clover leaf inspection
- Monitoring: using interceptors or active monitors
- Guidance on policies and activities to prevent bed bugs from becoming a problem, i.e. management strategies
- Advice for preventing bed bug problems from spreading
- Non-pesticide treatments such as heat, steam cleaning, vacuuming, encasements, etc.
- The use of least-toxic pesticides approved for bed bugs

2) Do you offer a building assessment?

The assessment will help determine where and when you got the bed bugs to avoid future infestation.

3) Do you provide a pre-treatment checklist?

It is essential that certain steps be taken before treatment for it to be effective, such as reducing clutter, cleaning, and washing linens and other items. If they do not provide pre-treatment preparation instructions, look elsewhere.

4) Do you perform a pre-treatment inspection?

To treat for bed bugs, the technician must know where they are located. An initial inspection by a trained technician will identify areas to treat. Clover leaf inspection is required by the Chicago ordinance.

5) Do you offer steam cleaning or other types of heat treatments?

Applying heat is one of the best ways to kill bed bugs. Steam cleaning is a safe, environmentally friendly way to kill bed bugs and their eggs. Steaming correctly can make using pesticide sprays unnecessary.

6) Do you recommend mattress covers?

Encasing mattresses in a zippered cover after treatment can help prevent future infestation. A pest control company that focuses on IPM should recommend using a mattress cover.

7) Do you only use pesticides recommended for bed bugs?

Pesticides are designed to be used for specific pests and by a specific method. For example, some pesticides are illegal for use on mattresses. Ask for the names and labels of pesticides to insure proper use.

8) Do you provide service reports of work performed and written recommendations of further actions to take to maintain a bed-bug-free facility?

Service reports and IPM recommendations will help you prevent bed bug problems in the future.

9) Please provide references of previous similar jobs.

A reputable bed bug treatment company will give you references of previously treated facilities. Get those numbers and make sure to call.

Canine Scent Detection: Pros and Cons

Canine scent detectors are another tool for dealing with bed bugs. Dogs are trained to react to the scent of bed bugs and can be useful for low-level, hard-to-find infestations. It is best to use canine detection with a licensed pest control operator. Be sure to check references and request certification credentials and a demonstration.

Keep in mind:

- There are no state or federal licensing requirements for dogs, but in Illinois, trainers should have their structural pest control license.
- The quality of the dog depends on the quality of the training. Ask how the dog is trained and how often.