

Pest management in the 21st century—prevention rather than chemicals

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from SAPCA

Captains of industry looked at the road ahead for the pest control industry in the 21st century at a recent SAPCA (South African Pest Control Association) Pestbiz Convention held in Cape Town from 13 to 14 August 2009.

"We're all operating in a global industry and are moving from an era of chemical solutions to a preventative solution with minimal use of chemicals. People are using the word 'green' more and more and the pest control industry is adjusting their practices to answer to the changing world trends," says Mr Rob Fryatt of Xenex Associates Ltd in the UK. This does not mean the elimination of chemicals as a whole but a more integrated approach combining preventative measures with the responsible use of chemicals.

He continued by saying that the Web is our face 24/7. Added to this, ethical and social issues are now the challenge. In the UK 'green' is not a nice idea only, it is the focus of the European Society. "We've moved past organic as this is the demand for all foods. We work with 40 % less chemicals than in 2003."

Retailer demands have forced the industry to adapt its service times to between 24:00 and 6:00 globally. Unfortunately, the perception still exists that a pest control officer (PCO) should not be seen on their clients' premises as this reflects poorly with customers. Globally and in South Africa, this stigma needs to be changed as it shows responsible health and safety precautions. "It is the role of the industry to make the consumer, public officials and legislators aware of the professionalism of the pest control officer. More focus needs to be placed on training and pest prevention rather than cure. This is one of our primary focuses", said marketing manager of Rentokil, Ms Pamela Mudley.

There was also a call for the Department of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries (DAFF) and the South African Pest Control Industry to work more closely together. Dr Boitshoko Ntshabele Director: Food Safety and Quality Assurance of the DAFF, commented in his presentation at the Pestbiz Convention that government needs the

assistance of the industry's expertise in order to deal with national disasters more proactively.

The issue of unregistered PCOs is becoming a major concern in SA – especially among farmers and agriculture in general. Dr Gerhard Verdoorn of AVCASA commented that especially farmers' biggest need is to get rid of a pest at the lowest cost – without wanting too much info or consideration for the safety, health or environmental impact. This opens the window to unregistered PCOs and the use of unregistered products. "I've come across many bogus guarantees and malpractices accepted by customers owing to ignorance or a lack of education. Unethical pest control is a real issue in SA although people want honesty, a fair deal and documentation", said Dr Verdoorn.

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Dr Verdoorn further mentioned that the industry and government have to take cognisance of the need for institutions such as SAPCA and that PCOs should be members of an industry association that can implement self-administration and self-regulation of the pest control industry.

Over the past 10 years, the request for information has increased exponentially. Climate change also adds to the problem, or the perceived problem, of pests in SA and globally. "Pests like termites and bed bugs cannot be controlled by a home or office owner. Further to this some people perceived any 'gogga' as a pest – only a registered PCO can truly identify real pests," says Dr Verdoorn. The challenge for SA is education. "People don't realise



that technically, anything can be dangerous to human health – with regard to chemicals. This includes chemicals such as bleach and all-purpose cleaners. Greater focus should be placed on the person using the chemicals and the use of these chemicals as it is often not the chemical that harms humans or the environment but rather the incorrect use thereof," concluded Dr Verdoorn.

The problems above answer the question whether professional pest control organisations are still needed today. Some of the biggest challenges for the pest control industry in SA are education, continuous training and the movement towards prevention, rather than cure.

NOTE TO THE READER

SAPCA is a professional association that offers members a platform to represent themselves and to introduce much needed national standards and controls regarding this industry. The Aerial Applicators' Association of South Africa offers the same services to aerial applicators.