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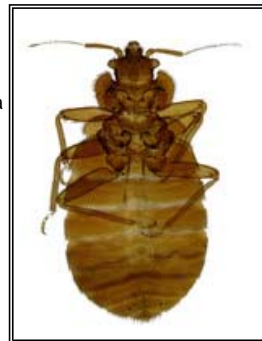
Supplier Case Study: Getting Beyond Bed Bugs

By
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*Editor's note: The following case study, submitted by **Dow AgroSciences**, describes how **Global Pest Control and Bed Bugs and Beyond** teamed up to solve a nightmare of a bed bug problem by fumigating with **Vikane gas fumigant**.*

There are bed bug jobs, and then there are bed bug jobs. Kery Bruzzo has been handling bed bug jobs for hotels, apartments and other multifamily housing in the New York and New Jersey area, since 1999. In 2007, the general manager for **Global Pest Control**, Airmont, N.Y., ran into a true nightmare bed bug situation.



"The customers were the owners of two condo units," he says. "We were the fourth pest control company they had hired. For almost a year we tried to take care of it with traditional tools — inspection, vacuuming, steam treatments and crack-and-crevice insecticide treatments. We would drill and treat in walls but could not get control because there were areas we could not reach with insecticides, or the bed bugs would simply move away from the treated areas. The problem was that one of the owners had tried a do-it-yourself approach for too long before calling in a professional, and the bed bug population just took over the structure."

Global now faced an unprofitable job, but the company was not going to walk away without getting the families relief or protecting Global's reputation. A full-service pest control company, Bruzzo says Global serves a large number of commercial housing clients in New York and New Jersey, treating 400-to-600 units per week. Many of these corporate clients have been with Global for 15 years or longer, and bed bugs are increasingly a concern.

Trying something new

To take this nightmare bed bug job to the next level, Bruzzo contacted **Bed Bugs and Beyond**, a New York, N.Y., company specializing in bed bug fumigations. Michael Batenburg, president and CEO of Bed Bugs and Beyond, says his team's inspection of the property confirmed that a fumigation of the entire structure was necessary. After explaining the tent fumigation process to the homeowners, they signed a contract with Global to have Bed Bugs and Beyond fumigate.

Bed Bugs and Beyond uses a seven-step program to eliminate bed bugs. The first four steps involve cleaning and removing clutter; using a trained dog to identify the infested areas; preparing for the fumigation; and application of residual insecticides by the pest control company, which is done at this point because cleaning has made treatment access easier. Step five is fumigation with Vikane gas fumigant. After the fumigation has been completed and the building cleared for re-entry, a trained dog verifies that bed bugs have been eliminated. Step seven is to fumigate any personal belongings that have been removed from the building to ensure they do not reintroduce bed bugs. Sometimes that can include fumigating an infested vehicle.

Batenburg says that when the building size and location makes it possible, a whole-structure fumigation can be completed in about 48 hours. Customers receive a one-year guarantee, but they must follow steps to avoid reintroducing bed bugs.

Fumigation awareness increasing

Both Batenburg and Bruzzo agree that the public and many pest control professionals are simply not aware about fumigation as a bed bug option.

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"A lot of people equate fumigation with bug bombs or steam treatments," Batenburg says. "Customers don't know that fumigation can be used for bed bugs. When we explain what Vikane gas fumigant does — that it stops bed bugs from using the oxygen they breath, then 90 percent of our customers say the same thing, 'I wish I knew about you earlier. I would have called you sooner.'"

"The more I learned about fumigation the more I was excited about it as a bed bug solution," Bruzzo adds. "Bed Bugs and Beyond was very knowledgeable and did not promise us the sun, the moon and the stars. My expectations were high and they were met. Our customers were very excited about fumigation as a solution and that made us happy. The results speak for themselves."

Bruzzo says that while some bed bug infestations can be handled with traditional treatments, fumigation is a service they now actively sell. "Our salespeople are up front about fumigation," he says. "We want to give customers options. If the customer wants us to try traditional treatments we can do that. If the customer wants to get rid of bed bugs tomorrow, we can do it with fumigation. We tell them that fumigation offers 100 percent control, guaranteed."

While price for fumigation can be a sales obstacle, Bruzzo says the customer has to compare that cost to potentially a full year's worth of treatments. The bottom line is that it can absolutely be more cost effective to fumigate.

Batenburg says that an increasing number of pest control companies are realizing the lost revenue and margins from never-ending bed bug jobs, as well as the negative impact these jobs can have on company reputation.

"Customers are asking who is doing bed bug jobs successfully and word gets around. If you are a company that can solve bed bug problems then that brings business in the door. We have seen that happen for just about every pest control company we have worked with. If you can get rid of the bed bugs for their customers, they are more likely to be hired to handle general pests, too." Batenburg says.

- A range of fumigation options -

While an entire building can be fumigated to eliminate bed bugs, the majority of Bed Bugs and Beyond's work is containerized fumigations of building contents. The company can fumigate and eliminate bed bugs from customers' contents in a truck, trailer, storage pod or a fumigation chamber.

Batenburg says fumigation will get a building or a person's contents to a baseline of zero for bed bugs, but because fumigation offers no residual the goal then becomes prevent re-infestation. The important role of fumigation to combat bed bugs has a proven history. Years ago, hotels and other multifamily buildings would make it a part of the tenant's contract to have their belongings fumigated before moving in. So, following a fumigation Bed Bugs and Beyond outlines steps to take to help prevent re-infestation.

"People are at their wits end," Batenburg says. "They are not looking for snake oil and theories, but solid information and facts. Home remedy claims and ineffective treatments force people to live in situations with bed bugs that cause emotional and physical effects, such as depression and sleep deprivation.

People may have a tolerance for ants and roaches and the normal way of treating for them, but that's not the situation with bed bugs. You can kill bed bugs and their eggs with direct residual insecticides if you could find every one. But that's nearly impossible, so multiple treatments over months are generally necessary. Fumigation gets rid of them in one treatment because we don't need to find every bed bug; the fumigant does."

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