



Housekeeping

by William D. Frye, Ph.D., CHE

Unique technology introduced for “sniffing out” hotel bedbug infestations

Another great article from *The Rooms Chronicle*, the #1 journal for hotel rooms management! ***Important notice: This article may not be reproduced without permission of the publisher or the author.*** College of Hospitality and Tourism Management, Niagara University, P.O. Box 2036, Niagara University, NY 14109-2036. Phone: 866-Read TRC. E-mail: editor@roomschronicle.com

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As many hotels struggle with the ongoing proliferation of bedbugs, a Chicago-based company has developed an innovative and cutting-edge approach to detecting bedbug infestations in hotels, resorts, cruise ships, university dormitories, homeless shelters, nursing homes, hospitals, and even the rental furniture industry. Rather than using traditional visual inspection means, Excelsis Detections utilizes the scent detection capabilities of canines.



A hotelier’s “best friend”

Owner, Joe Cascone, whose background includes twelve years of teen ministry, managing rental properties and flipping real estate, has previously utilized the sniffing abilities of dogs to detect mold in homes, churches, businesses, and food production plants. In 2005, Cascone asked his canine trainer, David Latimer of FSI in Vincent, Alabama, to begin training dogs to sniff out bedbugs.

Man’s best friend now serves as more than just a companion, or so it appears. “Canines have this incredible ability to detect explosives, narcotics, arson accelerants, fugitives, and even health problems in human beings.” Cascone continued, “As a result, we have been using dogs to detect mold, termites, and now, bedbugs.”

On the scent of bedbugs

It seems that just as nature has provided bedbugs with the gift of stealth, nature has also provided another creature, the canine, with an absolutely amazing olfactory sense. According to Cascone, “Detection is key because the female bedbug needs only to be fertilized once in her lifetime, and she can lay up to five eggs a day. That means one female can cause an infestation of over 4000 in just six months! Finding newly introduced bugs in an environment while numbers are low help eradication efforts tremendously.”

Cascone says that there is no higher level of bedbug detection than the scent detection canine. It takes a canine and handler over three months of specialized training for certification in the World Detector Dog Organization, but only four to five minutes to inspect an entire hotel room.

While developing Excelsis’ bedbug detection program, Cascone has spent the last twelve months studying from entomologists and pest control professionals, and gathering anecdotal information and input from the hospitality industry. In September, he spent a day with 230 experts in Washington D.C. at the first International Symposium on Bedbugs. “It was clear at the symposium that the re-emergence of *cimex lectularius* caught the pest management industry off-guard. It will take much time before effective pesticides can eliminate these bugs after a full-blown infestation. Detection of bedbugs at the onset is the key to avoiding rapid infestation, disaffected guests, negative publicity and costly litigation!” says Cascone.

And indeed, litigation can be costly. In November 2003, a Chicago jury awarded \$372,000 in punitive damages to two guests who endured bedbug bites at a Motel 6. In March 2006, a couple who said they suffered an attack from bedbugs at the Nevele Hotel in the Catskill Mountains of New York sued the hotel for \$20 million. One of the defendants claims she suffered more than 500 bites, from her scalp to her toes, and that she had to be treated with heavy steroids. Also in New York City, two Mexican businessmen who sued Leona Helmsley’s Park Lane Hotel claiming they were devoured by bedbugs there have settled their case for \$150,000.



Remediation approach

Once the canine locates the infestation, Cascone's company has an answer for high levels of bedbugs. Their Cimex program uses heat to kill adult bedbugs, their nymphs, eggs and any other insects infesting U.S. hotel rooms. Finding a way to deliver 140 degrees of heat throughout a hotel room, permeating for over four hours without melting the alarm clock and TV, is the secret of the Excelsis' bedbug remediation program.

It also takes only two days out of inventory to set up and complete heat treatment. Less down time means more rooms in inventory for a hotel to continue generating revenue. Confident in its new technologies, Cascone's company offers a 90-day guarantee on its bedbug remediation program.

Clearly, the aforementioned benefits along with the inherent protection from litigation by ongoing preventive inspections and thorough documentation make Excelsis Detections' new bedbug technologies attractive to the hospitality industry.

From the archives:

For more information on bedbugs, please see this TRC article:

- Bed bugs: Bad dreams and bad for business. Vol. 13, No. 2

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(Dr. William D. Frye is an associate professor of hotel management at Niagara University and executive editor of The Rooms Chronicle®. For more information on Excelsis Detections' bedbug solutions, please visit www.excelsisdetections.com or contact Joe Cascone and his staff toll-free at 866-902-3555.)