



The State of Our Future



2020 SPRING NEWSLETTER

# THE PEST DISPATCH

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## PRESIDENT’S MESSAGE

Tom Fraser, Professional Pest Control • [tfraser@profpestcontrol.com](mailto:tfraser@profpestcontrol.com)



It’s hard to believe this is my last President’s letter. After serving two terms, totaling four years as President and eight years on the Board of Directors, I am turning over the gavel to Matt Lang from Guardian Pest Solutions. Congratulations Matt! No more writing newsletter messages, however I will still be serving WPCA as the Immediate Past President to help Matt transition into his new role.

A special shout out and a huge thank you to long-standing WPCA Board Member Doug Blume of Arrow Pest Control. Doug has recently stepped down due to health reasons after serving WPCA for nearly 30 years. We wish Doug well in all his future endeavors.

With another WPCA conference under wraps, I am proud of the evolution of this event. I am confident that you have seen the changes and are happy with these changes, as evident with the positive comments we have received. This has grown to almost two full days now! We were really excited to actually have a keynote speaker: Danny Snow, who was born into a true Disney family. Danny taught us how to raise the bar of service and was a great addition.

Those of you who missed Danny’s presentation, or missed the conference as a whole, should definitely consider

PG. 15



*Want to be more profitable?  
How to be sure your gross  
margins are 50-55%.*

(Continued from page 1)

coming in the future. This is really a great opportunity for training, seeing new products, networking, and genuinely being a part of the industry. Plus no major snow storm this year!

I know we have said our thank yous, but I believe there is no better thing nor easier thing to do. Thank you to all our speakers for helping educate everyone. I do believe everyone in attendance learned from your presentations. Thank you to our vendors and sponsors. Without your continued support, this event would be a bust. You are our lifeline. Thank you to all the attendees. You know who you are. You don't *have* to be at this conference. You *choose* to be! Congratulations to you all for making this such a great industry. If I am missing a thank you to someone... here's yours: thank you!

And lastly, I can't thank the WPCA Board, past and present, enough for all the work they put in to the association. It has been a pleasure working with all of you, and I look forward to working with the new Board in my new position.

I can honestly agree with the old saying: if you surround yourself with good people, they will make you a great leader, and boy am I a great leader! Just kidding, but these Board members have been great and that is no joke!

And, in closing, let's all remember the words of Oscar Wilde, "Be yourself. Everyone else is already taken."

*(now picture me dropping the mic!)*

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# SNOW FLEAS—WHEN A “FLEA” ISN’T A FLEA

PJ Liesch, Extension Entomologist, UW Madison Insect Diagnostic Lab • pliesch@wisc.edu

Fleas (Order Siphonaptera) can be an unwanted surprise to clients—no one wants fleas in their home or yard and some species can be associated with human or animal diseases. Our most common flea on both cats and dogs (the cat flea, *Ctenocephalides felis*) may be annoying, but can be effectively controlled with a multi-pronged IPM approach: treatment of domestic animals (by consulting a veterinarian), regular and thorough vacuuming, and treatment within a home. While fleas could be encountered anytime of the year, I see the vast majority of flea cases at the UW Insect Diagnostic Lab in late spring and summer. In contrast, cases of fleas are few and far between during the winter months due to the dry conditions and lower temperatures.

There is one type of “flea”, however, that I see regularly through the winter months—the “snow flea.” Snow fleas (*Hypogastrura nivicola*) are not true fleas and likewise are mostly just a curiosity, although I do regularly get questions from both the general public and pest control professionals about them.

Snow fleas are technically a type of springtail (Collembola). In the pest control industry, we regularly encounter tiny springtails along foundations and sometimes they accidentally sneak indoors and end up on glue board traps. Springtails get their

name due to the furcula—an anatomical structure on the underside of their bodies—which springs backwards and sends them flying into the air. They can’t “jump” very far by human standards as most springtails are less than 1/10th of an inch long.

The snow flea is unusual for a springtail (and most arthropods) in the fact that these creatures can be active out on the snow in winter. With their dark greyish bodies, snow fleas can look as if someone had dumped out a pepper shaker on the snow, when abundant. Their ability to remain active on the snow is due to the concentration of specific proteins in their bodies, which serve as a cryoprotectant or natural “antifreeze.” During the rest of the year, these creatures simply blend in due to their dark color. The same furcula structure and ability to launch themselves into the air account for their nickname of “snow fleas”.

Overall, snow fleas tend to be of minor importance to the pest control industry. They will sometimes occur along foundations and can climb a bit onto the sides of structures and could be a temporary nuisance or curiosity if abundant. They often appear and disappear on their own over the course of a day or two.

Snow fleas and other springtails require humid conditions to survive, so they aren’t creatures that try to invade homes as they quickly perish indoors. If, for some reason, snow fleas were finding their way inside, it may be an indicator that additional exclusions efforts are needed. In addition, snow fleas and other springtails feed on materials such as fungal spores and are harmless to people, pets, and structures.

With that said, “flea” can be an undesirable word to clients, but “snow fleas” have no bite!





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# PREPARATION IS KEY TO PASSING CERTIFICATION EXAM

Mike Murray, Pesticide Program Manager, Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection • michael.murray@wisconsin.gov

To help your staff pass the commercial pesticide applicator certification exam, the Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection (DATCP) has several helpful tips.

Your employees likely need certification in the structural and possibly the aquatic/mosquito application categories in order to get licensed to apply pesticides in those situations. Yet DATCP's most recent statistics show that only 73 percent of those taking the structural test pass, and only 68 percent of those taking the aquatic/mosquito test pass.

Some of the challenges are a test-takers' understanding of what the test covers. They may think the exam only tests their knowledge of how to kill pests, rather than how to handle and use pesticides. This is related to not having studied the test manual. Some arrive for the exam without reviewing the print or PDF manual, which suggests they believe it will be an open-book exam. It is not.

As an employer, you rely on licensed applicators to stay in business. It's important to stress to your employees to thoroughly study the entire manual, paying close attention to the learning objectives at the beginning of each chapter. The test questions are based on those objectives.

Here are some other things you can do to increase your employees' chances of success on the first try:

- Be sure they get their training manuals at least a month before their test date.
- Give them time to access the University of Wisconsin Pesticide Applicator Training Program online course or attend a training session.
- Allow them time to study during work hours.
- Have a supervisor review with them the manual preface, "How to Pass the Certification Exam," emphasizing that the questions will be based on the learning objectives.



The manual and exam are written in English, because pesticide labels are in English and we need to know that applicators can read the labels. The exam covers a broader range of information and is not tailored to individual jobs.

If you have suggestions for any of the exam questions, please contact me at michael.murray@wisconsin.gov or 608-224-4551.

*This document was developed using authorities and information provided within Wis. Stat. ch. 94 and Wis. Admin. Code ch. ATCP 29.*



# 2020 SPRING TRAINING

WISCONSIN PEST CONTROL ASSOCIATION 2020 CONFERENCE

## YOUR SEASON STARTED HERE!

WPCA's annual Spring Training conference continues to grow and attract more attendees and exhibitors each year. This year's two-day educational event in mid-February attracted more than 175 attendees, welcomed a keynote speaker, and offered the opportunity to sit in on a dozen seminars presented by industry experts. Almost 30 exhibitors showcased their latest products, services, and resources.

VISIT [WWW.WISCONSINPEST.COM](http://WWW.WISCONSINPEST.COM) TO SEE THE PHOTO GALLERY FROM THIS YEAR'S CONFERENCE.



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# TAKE-AWAYS FROM OUR CONFERENCE PRESENTERS

We asked the presenters at our 2020 Spring Training Conference what they wanted attendees to take away from their presentations. Here's what some of them shared.

## Equipment: How PMPs deliver active ingredients to target pests



**John Kane**

Different kinds of gear meet different kinds of needs. If you come to understand your equipment options, and then join knowledge and experience with the proper equipment, and then routinely take care of your equipment, you'll improve your results for both yourself and your customers.

## Moles: Dig Your Way to Higher Profits



**Sara Knilans**

Moles and voles can be a financially successful addition to your already existing pest control service. Every account is a little bit different. Some accounts may just be a one-time service. Other accounts may be more continuous and you can sell this as a month-to-month service. Communication with your customer is extremely important in determining whether to use traps or Talpirid. In some ongoing accounts a combination of both might be the answer.

## 2019's Insect Trends from the UW Insect Diagnostic Lab



**PJ Liesch**

The pest trends we see in the Midwest vary from year to year, but 2019's polar vortex and the abundant rainfall played important roles in our recent insect trends. The rainy conditions last year knocked down populations of certain insects, such as boxelder bugs, and outdoor pests like gypsy moths. In contrast, mosquitoes thrived in many parts of the Midwest and 2019 saw an alarming spike in cases of Eastern Equine Encephalitis in Midwestern states such as Michigan and Indiana. Some outdoor pests took a hit due to the polar vortex, but will likely bounce back over time. Other insects seemed unfazed by 2019's weather—such as the invasive brown marmorated stink bug, which continued to strengthen its footholds in the state.

## Utilizing Technology In Pest Management



**Shane McCoy**

Embrace technology so you and your business don't get left behind. Empower yourself to improve efficiency, improve employee motivation, and advance your business in the digital age. Jump in, the water is fine!





## Structural Pesticide Regulations



**Mike Murray**

Following directions on pesticide labels and complying with the regulation is important. One key thing I hope everyone gained from my talk at the WPCA conference is that

the Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection is available to help you decipher label language and understand how the rules apply to your situation. One of the best parts of the conference is talking directly with so many pest management professionals. If you have a question, don't wait until next year's conference to ask, give me a call or send an email.

## Delivering World-Class Customer Service: Lessons from the Mouse



**Danny Snow**

The key takeaway from my presentation is the idea that the experience matters. The pricing and services that you offer are important and need to be competitive, but the experience that you

deliver to your customers is what will set you apart from your competition. The organizations that design their processes through the lens of their customers, pay attention to the details, create moments of "wow" for their customers, and eliminate frustrations will reap the benefits of customer loyalty for years to come.

## Wildlife Trapping



**Paul Winkelmann**

My thought on adding services for problem wildlife removal is fairly simple. First of all, you're already in the right business! Not everyone has squirrels, but everyone does

have insects! As long as you're already up in the crawlspace looking for mice anyway, why not get rid of the raccoons, bats, or squirrels, that are also up there? Even if you're not comfortable with most wildlife, being able to identify the problems and telling your customers about them is a definite plus! Furthering your education is always a step forward and being able to handle both pests and wildlife can surely benefit your company!





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• Use in food and non-food areas	✓	✓	✓

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# NEW PRODUCT RELEASES

## Flatline™ Soft Bait



Liphatech Inc. introduced Flatline™ Soft Bait to their portfolio of soft bait products. Flatline is the first and only soft bait rodenticide containing the active ingredient chlorophacinone, an ideal choice for pest management professionals (PMPs) looking for an everyday use product to help stop damage caused by rodents.

As chlorophacinone is a first-generation anticoagulant rodenticide, Flatline is a multiple-feed soft bait that effectively kills rats and mice. Flatline maintains its integrity in hot environments, is attractive to rats and mice and can be used for light to heavy rodent activity.

Flatline Soft Bait is packaged in a conveniently sized 28-gram soft bait pouch which can be quickly secured with bait rods or feeding devices, such as SoftSecure™ Technology (SST). As with all Liphatech soft baits, Flatline is made without nuts or seeds to reduce debris and service time for PMPs.

Flatline Soft Bait rodenticide is available to PMPs in 4 lb. individual bags of 28-gram pouches or in 8-bag cases. Specifically, Flatline can be used to target Norway rats, roof rats, house mice, deer mice and other rodent species as listed on the product label.

## Sprayable Advion WDG

Syngenta has introduced Advion® WDG insecticide—a sprayable version of the Advion brand that can be used across diverse jobs and accounts.

Advion WDG controls a broad spectrum of insects like ants, cockroaches, termites and more with the active ingredient indoxacarb. As a non-pyrethroid

and non-neonicotinoid product, it can be used in a variety of account types, including:

### **Commercial**

- Within food-handling establishments—even when the facility is in operation—as a spot or crack-and-crevice treatment, as directed by product label
- As a 10-ft. perimeter band outdoors
- Within transportation equipment such as trains, boats or buses

### **Residential**

- As a spot or crack-and-crevice treatment indoors
- As a 10-ft. perimeter band outdoors

Because Advion WDG is non-repellent, it can also be used in conjunction with gel baits.

As with the entire Advion line of products, Advion WDG features a MetaActive™ effect that differentiates between target insects and non-target organisms. Indoxacarb becomes active when it is ingested by a target insect and comes into contact with the insect's own enzymes, ensuring only target insects are affected.

With its delayed mode of action, indoxacarb can be passed through a pest population via shared behaviors like grooming, trophallaxis and necrophagy, resulting in exponential control. This horizontal transfer allows for more thorough control of insect populations.



**(Continued on next page)**

We highlight products released within the past six months for use by pest control professionals. Companies seen here are WPCA members and/or supporters. Inclusion of a product should not be seen as an endorsement by WPCA. For full submission guidelines, or to submit a product for consideration, contact [dana@barefoot-marketing.com](mailto:dana@barefoot-marketing.com).

# NPMA OFFERS DIGITAL RESOURCES

Looking for ways to improve your business while you're dealing with the Corona Virus isolation? The National Pest Management Association offers a number of online training resources at <https://nmpapestworld.org/resourcecenter/online-training-resources>.

As a member, you get exclusive access to dozens of technical and business courses in NPMA's Online Learning Center. Learn at your own pace with over 60 webinars hosted by academic and industry experts. Plus you can review speaker handouts and presentations from over 30 archived NPMA events.

## Online Learning Center

Whether you're working towards certification, earning state-required recertification credits, or looking to further your knowledge, the NPMA Online Learning Center powered by FORSHAW has what you need.

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## NEW PRODUCT RELEASES, CONT.

### Xlure®-RTU Inspector: a New Look

J. F. Oakes, LLC announced that the Xlure®-RTU Inspector has a fresh new look that incorporates the Xlure® blue color that everyone has come to associate with their Xlure® monitoring traps.

The new blue Xlure®-RTU Inspector is one of many to come with a QR code printed on the trap, allowing technicians to scan and easily access instructions and information. Account auditors will be able to scan the QR code to quickly verify insects being monitored.



By integrating with your NPMA member profile, the new system allows you to maintain your training records all in one place.

## NPMA BugBytes

NPMA's original podcast channel features engaging interviews with industry icons and researchers. Learn about the latest in science and technology impacting the pest management industry today!

## NPMA 360

NPMA360 is a virtual reality training series that delivers a state of the art training experiences to any mobile device or computer. Don't forget to subscribe to be sure you never miss an episode!

## Share Our Industry's Story of Pride and Professionalism

The work of our members and all pest management professionals affects the lives of millions, making people safer, healthier and happier. Although we see the impact of our work daily, many of the positive outcomes of pest management go unrecognized. This shareable video will help companies convey the value of our industry and the essential nature of our work to a diverse group of audiences.

## NPMA on Demand

NPMA brings experts directly to you through our webinar series. View the upcoming webinars as well as the recorded webinars from 2010 through today. Topics include workplace safety, marketing your company on the internet, and, of course, pests.

## Conference Proceedings

Miss a talk at Pestworld or another NPMA program? Want to check your notes? Conference attendees can download the proceedings and presentations from NPMA events.

# WANT TO BE MORE PROFITABLE? YOUR GROSS MARGINS NEED TO BE 50-55%

Daniel S. Gordon, CPA • dan@pcobookkeepers.com

When you sell products, calculating your gross margin is easy. It's the difference between how much you purchase a product for and how much you sell the product for, stated as a percentage. Example: You sell a bait station for \$30 and it cost you \$18, your gross profit is \$12 and your gross margin is 40 percent.

Why is this number so important? Because the total gross profit on all products sold initially is used to pay off overhead (fixed costs). Once overhead is paid off, also known as the break-even point, you begin to make profit at the rate of gross margin times the sales price of all items sold in excess of breakeven. The gross profit contributes to paying off fixed costs, and once paid off the gross profit contributes to net profit of the firm. This is the reason many accountants refer to gross margin as the contribution margin. The above concept is known as breakeven analysis and is one of the elementary cost control and pricing strategies taught at business schools.

As you increase or decrease selling prices while holding direct costs constant, your gross margin rises or falls and, therefore, your breakeven point in number of units to be sold decreases or increases based on selling price.

**OK, so this breakeven analysis is some powerful stuff, but I am in the pest control business and we offer a service not a product.**

How do I make this calculation for a service where no products are being sold? How do I calculate gross margin and breakeven point?

The key to employing gross margin as a key performance indicator in a service business is to **define a unit of measure that we sell** since we don't sell products. In the pest business, we sell time. Specifically, we sell the time it takes to take care of

the customer's problem as well as retreatment time as needed. If we define our unit of service as one hour, we can begin to calculate our direct cost (the cost to provide one hour of service before applying any fixed costs).

In pest control we usually look for material cost of about 5-8% and technician labor to be about 20-22% and other direct costs, such as vehicle costs, workers comp, uniforms, etc., to be about 20%. Taking these direct costs together, the most efficient companies have direct costs of about 45-50%, making their gross margins 50-55%.

By understanding the actual direct costs per hour, we can back into our selling price per hour while targeting the gross margin percentage of these most efficient companies. Example: Assume our direct costs are \$50 per hour, a selling price of \$100 per hour would yield a 50% gross margin. A direct cost of \$45 per hour with a selling price of \$100 per hour would yield a 55% gross margin.

Performing breakeven analysis is fundamental to business success. By looking at selling price, direct costs, gross margins, fixed costs and net profit we can determine if we are making adequate profit compared to our past results or others in the industry. And if not, is our problem one of pricing, direct costs associated with performing service, or costs to run our office?

*Daniel S. Gordon is a CPA in New Jersey and owns an accounting and consulting firm that caters to pest management firms throughout the U.S. For more information, visit [pcobookkeepers.com](http://pcobookkeepers.com) or reach Dan at [dan@pcobookkeepers.com](mailto:dan@pcobookkeepers.com).*





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## THE PEST DISPATCH

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\* If we somehow omitted your company's name, please let us know so we may correct the error.