

The Market Today: All Eyes on Small Flies

Working with Clients: What Does 'Clean' Mean?

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Exclusive Interviews & Research



**STATE OF THE  
Small Fly  
Market**

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# All **Eyes** on Small Flies

Sanitation is top of mind now more than ever – and for some PMPs, discerning customers under pressure to ‘keep it clean’ are turning out to be better service partners.

If there were ever a time when sanitation and a concern over cleanliness was top of mind, this is it. Winding down from a pandemic, the general public has been schooled in hand-washing, social distancing, mask-wearing and germs on surfaces. If something doesn't look or feel clean, it's a no-go. This heightened awareness puts pressure on businesses, particularly in the food industry.

“If you go into restaurants these days, people are so concerned about the appearance and cleanliness, so any kind of fly situation can put a black mark on them — and they are very conscious of it now,” says Bryan Baird, president, Baird's Pest Control, Valdosta, Ga.

Not to mention, an especially wet year in Baird's region is bringing out all the bugs. “It seems like the conditions are just right with the sanitation, wetness and people are more aware,” he says.

AJ Treleven IV sees the same consumer attitudes, which is prompting some Sprague Pest Solutions customers to take their role in keeping small flies out

more seriously. “Customer tolerance of anything that looks ‘gross’ is lower than it has ever been,” says Treleven, director of operations at the Tacoma, Wash.-based company. “What is acceptable is a lot different than it was pre-COVID, and it's also more of a challenge to work with a manager or decision-maker who is not on site because they are limiting the number of people in a building.”

Does this mean a greater demand for small fly services or future growth in this sector? Baird believes so, and his account base of bars and restaurants — currently

no more than 10 percent — is on the rise. “We are growing now,” he reports.

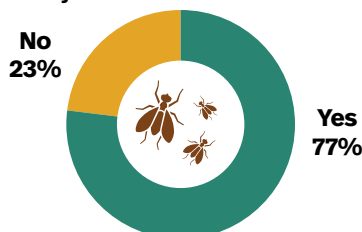
But not all pest management professionals who offer small fly services say there's more interest, in spite of a public eye on keeping it clean. Sixty-one percent of respondents to PCT's Small Fly Market Report Survey said the service is neither more nor less a significant part of their business. As for revenue potential, 66 percent expect no change and 29 percent predict an increase in revenues from selling small fly services in 2021.

That said, small fly complaints can bring in new business. Most of the PMPs we talked to said small fly struggles can trigger a call for service, and they acquire new accounts because a previous provider failed to get a problem under control.

In urban markets especially, Sprague Pest Solutions says it's not uncommon for their sales team to walk into a situation where small fly efforts failed before. “There are so many factors in an urban market with garbage, alleys and the concentration of businesses,” Treleven relates.

## THREE-QUARTERS OFFER CONTROL

**Does your company location offer small fly control services?**



Source: Readex Research; Number of Respondents: 155

“One building might have several restaurants in it and with how they feel about flies, the threshold is lower.”

Billy Blasingame, president, Blasingame Pest Management, Locust Grove, Ga., says his team does a “fair amount” of small fly work with current customers and has earned some new business because a former provider flopped. But what usually comes to the surface is an “a-ha” realization by the client that best practices for minimizing small fly pressure were not in place.

“Once we start working on the account and educate them, they are shocked and say, ‘We didn’t know that before,’” he says. “They are really surprised when we teach them about small flies and sanitation.”

What’s changed — and what has stayed the same in the small fly sector?

As our research and interviews indicate, education and training have always been paramount for treating small flies — along with a proper, thorough inspection, of course. Another constant is the type of account that is most likely to call about small flies: businesses in the food and beverage industry. And treatment protocols for managing small flies have remained consistent during recent years.

But all this doesn’t mean it’s the same-old with small flies. PMPs continue to fine-tune these processes, elevating communication with tools like pictures and giving hands-on lessons to teach clients what sanitation *really* is. They’re focusing even more on engaging customers because without buy-in, there are callbacks and cancellations.

Another change: Given the world we’ve been living in during the last year and a half, customers are accepting of strategies to maintain a safe and healthy environment. “With small flies comes odors related to drains and mopheads — it’s tangible to customers,” Blasingame says. “If you have small flies, you know it and your customers know it.” 🦟

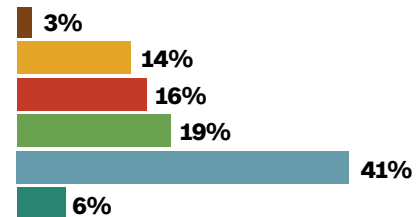


MEAN/AVERAGE:  
**5.4%**

- 20% or more
- 10%-19%
- 5%-9%
- 3%-4%
- 1%-2%
- none

## PERCENTAGE OF REVENUE

What percentage of your location’s overall 2020 revenue was generated by small fly control services?

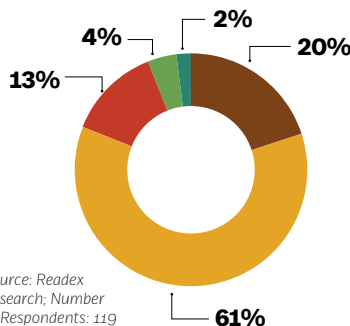


Source: Readex Research; Number of Respondents: 119

## ONE-FIFTH ARE GROWING

In the past five years, have small fly control services become a more or less significant portion of your location’s business?

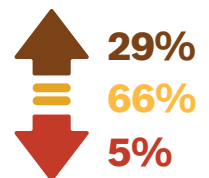
- more significant
- no change
- less significant
- cannot compare; not involved five years ago
- no answer



Source: Readex Research; Number of Respondents: 119

## OPTIMISTIC FOR 2021

How do you expect your location’s revenue generated from its small fly control services to change in the next year?



Source: Readex Research; Number of Respondents: 119

## CALLBACK RATE

What is your location’s typical callback rate for small fly control jobs?

20% or more	3%
15% - 19%	3%
10% - 14%	4%
5% - 9%	13%
3% - 4%	15%
1% - 2%	39%
no callbacks	19%
no answer	2%
mean	4.1%



Source: Readex Research; Number of Respondents: 119

## BUSIEST SEASON

What season tends to be the busiest for your location providing small fly control services?

Source: Readex Research; Number of Respondents: 119



SPRING  
**23%**



SUMMER  
**59%**

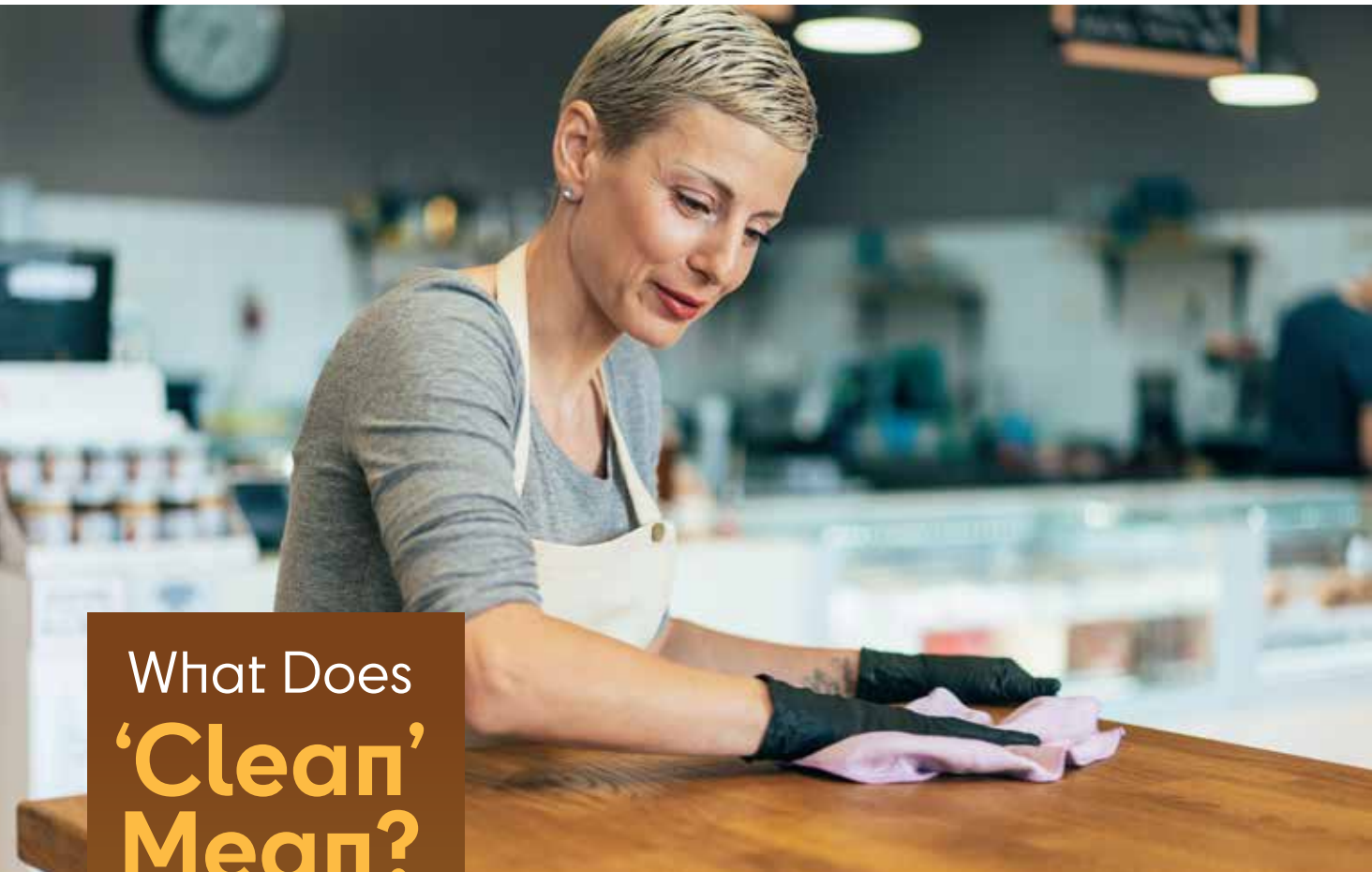


WINTER  
**0%**



FALL  
**6%**

NO SEASONAL DIFFERENCE **11%** // NO ANSWER **2%**



## What Does 'Clean' Mean?

It's a new world as far as clean surfaces go. But how much do customers care when the public isn't in their buildings?

**A**re commercial kitchens and businesses with food-handling areas cleaning up their act? Across the board, is there a greater focus on sanitation and buy-in from managers — or are pest management professionals (PMPs) walking into the same, old behind-the-scenes messes?

The jury's out.

"I'd say they're doing a better job than five years ago," says Anthony DeLisio,

owner, Insector Inspector, Highland Heights, Ohio. "I think people are more aware, and sanitation and cleanliness has definitely come to the forefront," he says, noting that he services some restaurants and schools with cafeterias. "So, I keep giving them helpful tips and pushing sanitation — that helps."

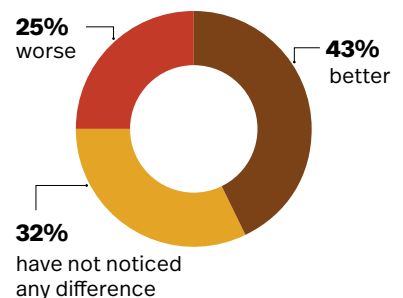
Doug Foster also sees more cooperation and interest in sanitation. His team members who are out in the field servicing kitchens says "the restaurants are looking cleaner during all of this" — referencing the pandemic. The owner of Burt's Termite & Pest Control, Columbus, Ind., says "the restaurants that are staying open are trying to keep their workers on payroll." Therefore, they can assign them sanitation tasks that might have taken the back burner before.

Before the shut-down last spring,

some restaurants called in the pros for a deep cleaning and treatment before closing their doors. "They knew they were closing, so they wanted me to do final

### COMMERCIAL KITCHEN SANITATION UPS AND DOWNS

**Would you say sanitation in your location's commercial kitchen accounts is getting better or worse?**



Source: Readex Research; Number of Respondents: 95

treatments and that helped — I didn't walk into problems after them reopening," DeLisio says. "And, they had time and employees, so they did some good, deep cleans then I came in and did my thing. Then they shut the doors."

The opposite seemed to be true in the Valdosta, Ga., market where Bryan Baird operates Baird's Pest Control. The food industry was frustrated with closing orders. "They were very frustrated, so when they closed, they just closed," he says. "Then they got back, and some of those nicer restaurants that closed up too quick came back and small flies were everywhere. Of course, you can't open up and clear them out, so that is when they started taking care of the problem."

Now, Baird thinks his restaurant clients have upped the ante with cleaning and sanitation. "With COVID, people are very conscious of appearance," he says. "Restaurants we treat are recommending us to others that were not doing it well before."

On the other hand, some establishments have let their guard down after shifting to drive-through or take-out only. It's out of sight, out of mind. "They don't have to worry about the public walking up to the service counter and seeing a mess that might be there," says Billy Blasingame, president, Blasingame Pest Management, Locust Grove, Ga.

And, short-staffed establishments are focused on ringing up business, not taking extra sanitary measures, Blasingame says. "That is why such a huge part of our program is about educating and keeping sanitation in the forefront. Often, restaurants do not do a good job of that."

A cleaning program is only as good as the least interested employee. And budget comes into play, too. "There are definitely restaurant groups and franchises that take it more seriously than others, and on the whole, [sanitation] doesn't appear to have become drasti-

cally more important to most people," says Ashley Roden, technical trainer for Sprague Pest Solutions based in Tacoma, Wash. That said, "In the last five to 10 years, the tools have gotten better in terms of what we can do with bioremediation products to help them, as well as a bigger focus on exclusion."

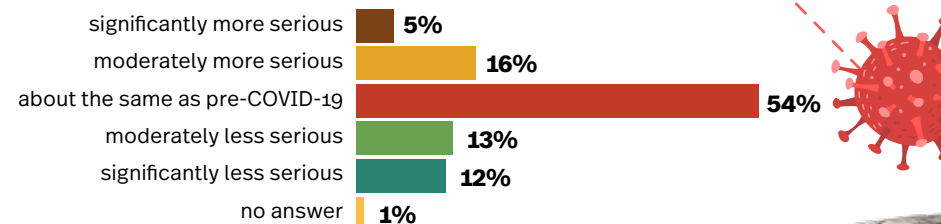
Lack of cooperation and poor sanitary practices in commercial kitchens is what led Eddie Lopez, owner of A Better Way Exterminators, to stop servicing these types of accounts. "A lot of times, these places didn't have a proper kitchen built, with hidden harborage places for small

flies," he says of the mom-and-pop shops he used to service in Miami, Fla. "And a lot of times, sanitation was expensive for them — and they didn't want to invest in buying foams or drain gels."

His other frustration was when kitchen clients, in particular, would rather him treat a small fly problem with chemicals than evaluate their cleaning protocols. "They didn't understand the restrictions for applying pesticides in food-handling areas," he says, adding that overall, servicing accounts that wouldn't cooperate was not worth risking his reputation. 🦟

## HOW THE PANDEMIC AFFECTED COMMERCIAL KITCHENS

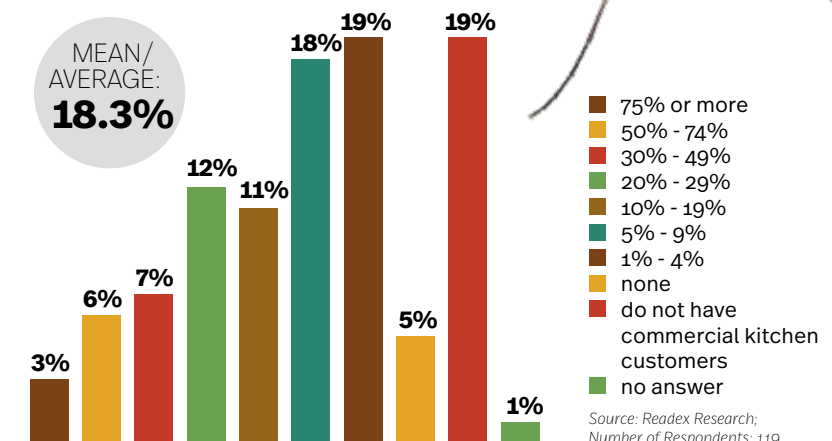
**Were small fly problems more or less serious when your location's commercial kitchen accounts began to open up following the height of the COVID-19 pandemic?**



Source: Readex Research; Number of Respondents: 95

## CONSISTENTLY A PROBLEM?

**What percentage of your location's commercial kitchen customers have regular problems with small flies (at least once per quarter)?**



Source: Readex Research; Number of Respondents: 119

# END SMALL FLY CALLBACKS

Are your commercial kitchen accounts costing you extra time and money with callbacks about small flies?

Small flies are one of the most persistent and frustrating pests in a commercial kitchen. Our drain protocol provides you with the tools, products and procedures to control the worst drain fly problems so you're not going back week after week with the same intense level of service.

## DRAIN FOAMING: Mixing Instructions for Dry Foam

	Water	ProFoam Platinum	Nibor-D (10%)	DSV <sup>®</sup>
Can be used with the preliminary investigation and individually when pest issues are severe.	1 gal.	Approx. 7 oz	Two 8 oz packets (or 10 scoops)	3 oz
Use when pest populations have been decreased and/or incorporating a bio-sanitation treatment.	3/4 gal.	2 oz	Two 8 oz packets (or 10 scoops)	1 qt
			Nibor-D (10%)	Bac-Azap <sup>®</sup>

## DRAIN MAINTENANCE PROTOCOL

The Nisus drain maintenance protocol combines the use of Nibor-D<sup>®</sup> with Nisus DSV<sup>™</sup> as a primary application against pest insects. We recommend using at least a 10% solution mix for the initial treatment. As the pest pressure decreases, a 5% solution might be adequate to contain the pest population. After pest populations have been eliminated or decimated to low levels, use Bac-Azap<sup>®</sup> for your bio-sanitation program. This protocol is a guideline and allows for flexibility depending on needs.

- 1. First Visit: Preliminary Inspection and Investigation. Note: Drains may require cleaning prior to beginning the control process.**
  - a. Remove soils and matter from drains with a drain brush (dip or spray drain brush with DSV solution while cleaning).
  - b. Spray DSV solution directly into the drains to disinfect prior to drain treatment.
  - c. Foam drains with Nibor-D, DSV and ProFoam<sup>®</sup> Platinum solution.
- 2. Second Visit: IPM - determine the post population pressure.**
  - a. Inspect drains for buildup and clean if necessary, again using brush dipped in DSV solution.
  - b. Foam drains with Nibor-D and ProFoam Platinum with either DSV or Bac-Azap.
- 3. Third Visit: IPM - determine the post population pressure.**
  - a. Foam drains with Bac-Azap and ProFoam Platinum.
- 4. Follow-up visits: IPM process. Adjust product mix based on specific needs and pest pressure.**





# GIVE US YOUR TOUGHEST CHALLENGE... WE'LL HELP YOU GET CONTROL.

- Nibor-D® taints the organic food sources to kill the developing fly larvae and adults.
- Nisus DSV™ disinfects and kills small fly larvae.
- ProFoam® Platinum delivers premium foaming power.
- Bac-Azap® breaks adds bio-sanitation by breaking down organic bio-film and eliminating its odors.



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# In It Together

Savvy PMPs take a partnership approach to managing small fly infestations, earning complete buy-in from customers.





When Bryan Baird first started treating commercial kitchen accounts for small flies, he admits, “If I had to tell a technician the worst way to do it, that’s what I did. I literally did it the wrong way.”

It’s not that Baird went into the service blind. He had researched products and thoroughly inspected accounts. He knew exactly where small flies loved to harbor, and he was effective at finding the root of an infestation and using the cleaning and treatment tools he had in his arsenal.

But what was “the worst” is how he



explained the issue to customers. “You can’t just say to a restaurant manager, ‘sanitation,’ because that means something different to everyone,” he says. “You have to teach people, get down on your hands and knees, and show them what you are talking about.”

Baird learned this the hard way with a restaurant account that he almost lost. “They said, ‘We are paying you this money but you’re not doing what you’re supposed to be doing,’” he says. What he wasn’t doing was giving the restaurant specific cleaning and sanitation protocols.

He started taking pictures, discussing ways to better sanitize and how to avoid creating an environment where small flies thrive. He got specific. Communication is, perhaps, the most important aspect of treating small flies.

“We saved the account, and he has called other restaurants and recommended us,” Baird says, relating how the manager took his recommendations seriously and the job became a true partnership. “Don’t depend on chemicals — depend on training. It’s a group effort, and sanitation is the No. 1 thing to do.”

## CLEANING OUT SMALL FLIES

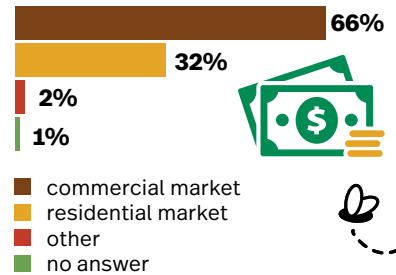
What *not* to do: Fire up a pressure washer, douse grease-covered floors with blasts of hot water, aiming carefully at the bases of equipment like fryers and ovens while pushing grimy water down the drains.

How many times do you walk into a new commercial kitchen account and learn that this spray-it-away method is their go-to for sanitation? “This is one of the most common poor practices we see,” says Doug Foster, owner of Burt’s Termite & Pest Control, Columbus, Ind. “Almost everyone thinks, ‘Oh, we’ll deep clean this weekend and bring in the power washer, but you know that blows stuff everywhere,’” he said. “So, the debris that used to be confined under a piece of equipment is now blown up the wall behind the equipment. It just scatters the organic material everywhere.”

Bryan Baird says, “People do not

## MONEY MAKERS

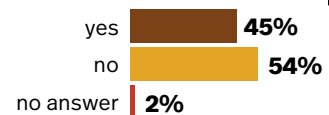
What small fly control market generated the most revenue for your location in 2020?



Source: Readex Research; Number of Respondents: 119

## PART OF THE PACKAGE?

Are small flies included as part of your location’s general pest control (GPC) service?



Source: Readex Research; Number of Respondents: 119

understand that sanitation isn’t just taking the trash out.” That’s why his team at Baird’s Pest Control in Valdosta, Ga., shows customers videos that explain where small flies harbor. He keeps in contact with the night managers at restaurants. “We come by every once in a while at closing time to say, ‘How is everything going? Is there anything we can help you do?’ We get the communication going.”

In terms of treating small fly, the pest management professionals (PMPs) we talked to agree that thorough inspections, client education/communication and implementation of sanitization best practices are the best ways to achieve and maintain small fly control.

## 1 Inspection, Please

A “stacked” approach to treating small flies at Sprague Pest Solutions based in Tacoma, Wash., begins with an inspection to locate the source, says Technical Trainer



# STATE OF THE Small Fly Market

Ashley Roden. “That inspection helps us solve the problem way faster,” she says. “When we talk to customers, we let them know we want to be able to do that good inspection — we are not checking traps and leaving.”

Inspection takes the bulk of the time for each service visit, Roden adds.

These inspections can lead to sources that customers are surprised to discover.

For example, Blasingame says nasty tools are an unexpected nesting place. “You know long-handled dust pans?” he relates. “They don’t ever clean them.”

That is, until Blasingame points out how small fly infestations happen. Mop heads, mop sinks, buckets, dust pans — “we bring these issues to the forefront,

and our customers really see value in that,” he says.

## 2 Help Us Help You

That’s the name of a worksheet Doug Foster hands out to small fly customers. Essentially, it’s a form that allows his team members to document issues. “We’ll write down things like, ‘The drain under the ice machine needs cleaning,’” he relates. “At least we’ve got record of everything, and most of the time we leave it with the manager, but a lot of times a copy is attached to the invoice that goes to the controller — the owner — and then, stuff magically gets done.”

Explaining during a walk-through is important. “But just telling them is not

good enough,” Foster says. “We need something in writing.”

## 3 Smart Sanitizing

In many kitchens, sanitization is nothing more than moving dirt around or bleaching gunk. A combination of fill-zone treatments, drain-cleaning and bio-remediation products are necessary to clean out a small fly problem.

Doug Foster also suggests his customers get drain cleanings on a quarterly basis. He partnered with a professional who specializes in this service, and they refer customers to each other. “If they stick with that cleaning on a regular basis combined with our services, that basically resolves many of the problems,” he says.

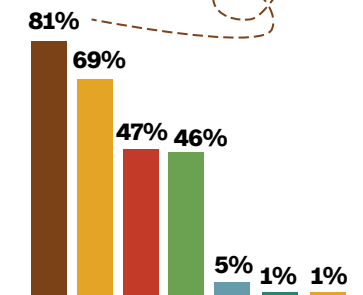
Like with all pest problems, a full toolbox is required for treating small flies. PMPs should discuss expectations with clients so they realize there’s no silver bullet or overnight solution, says Billy Blasingame, Blasingame Pest Management. “Many people think once you come in, you’ll spray and they can clean later,” he says. “Teach them A to Z how a small fly program works so they understand it’s not just about the products, it’s about cooperation and doing their part with sanitization — and staying diligent.” 🪰



### ALL PROBLEMATIC SPECIES

What small flies tend to be problematic in your market area?

- fruit flies
- drain/moth flies
- phorid flies
- fungus gnats
- other
- none
- no answer

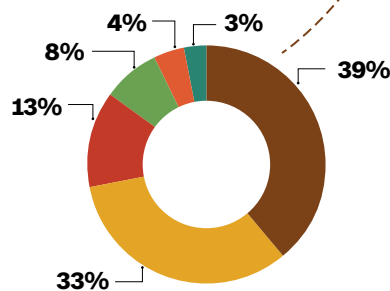


Source: Readex Research; Number of Respondents: 119; Respondents could select multiple answers

### MOST PROBLEMATIC SPECIES

What small fly represented the largest percentage of your location’s service calls in the past year?

- fruit flies
- drain/moth flies
- fungus gnats
- phorid flies
- other
- no answer



Source: Readex Research; Number of Respondents: 119

## About this Survey

The PCT 2021 State of the Small Fly Market survey was sponsored by Nisus Corp. and compiled by Readex Research, a privately held research firm in Stillwater, Minn.

A sample of 4,264 pest control company owners, operators, executives and technical directors was systematically selected from the PCT database. Data was collected from 155 respondents – a 4 percent response rate – via online survey from March 29-April 9, 2021. The margin of error for percentages based on 119 respondents whose location offers small fly control services is plus or minus 8.9 percentage points at the 95 percent confidence level. Charts may not add up to 100 percent due to rounding.



# PHOTOS, On the Fly

Many PMPs are leveraging smartphone images to communicate better with clients.

**D**uring the pandemic, restaurant managers and supervisory personnel weren't necessarily on site to have a post-service visit huddle to discuss issues related to pest control. So, companies like Sprague Pest Solutions based in Tacoma, Wash., leveraged technology: smartphone pics of harborage areas, sanitation missteps and other gunk.

The clients loved it.

"It does a couple of things," explains Technical Trainer Ashley Roden. "It helps keep us on track because employees can look back on progress month to month, and our clients were asking us, 'Can you text us pictures of what you're seeing — it's helping with communication.'"

Thinking of adding photography as a more formal aspect of your operation vs.

an on-the-fly "look at this" transaction? Here are some benefits:

- **Customer engagement.** Photographs of sanitization situations help managers understand their role in small fly control. "We can text the pictures and talk about what we see," Roden says.
- **Informing off-site managers.** Owners of multiple restaurant locations might not be on site after a service call to get a verbal run-down. "Pictures give us the ability to have a more elevated conversation with decision-makers at a corporate office," Roden says, adding that they can compare restaurant conditions. "They might look at the differences and say, 'Why does this drain look like this,' and it let's them set a policy or standard on a global scale for their chain or restaurant."
- **Getting a closer look.** Sprague Pest uses selfie-sticks and borescope to take deep-down pictures of drains. "It's much better than bringing the nasty gunk out of the drain and showing them," Roden says. "A picture can show the ickiness vividly."
- **Storing images.** Photos are stored in the company software so if a customer calls in, images can be accessed.
- **Ask permission.** While Sprague does not have a formal photo agreement, technicians are trained to ask customers if they will give permission for the company to take pictures while on site. "While food plants are not going to let you take pictures, restaurants tend to be more lenient," Roden says. "And overall, these pictures are helping with communication." 🦟

REMOVE ORGANIC BUILDUP

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IN COMMERCIAL KITCHENS

Bio-sanitation is critical to an effective sanitation program in both commercial kitchens and residential accounts.

Standard sanitation practices often do not address biofilm in drains.

Get rid of the built-up organic slime in drains as well as cracks and crevices using Foam Fresh's seven biofilm-busting strains of beneficial microbes.

Foam Fresh features:

- 18 oz. can
- 3mm 17" semi-rigid hose with every can
- Full cone-spray and drain actuators
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