

# BECOMING PEST READY

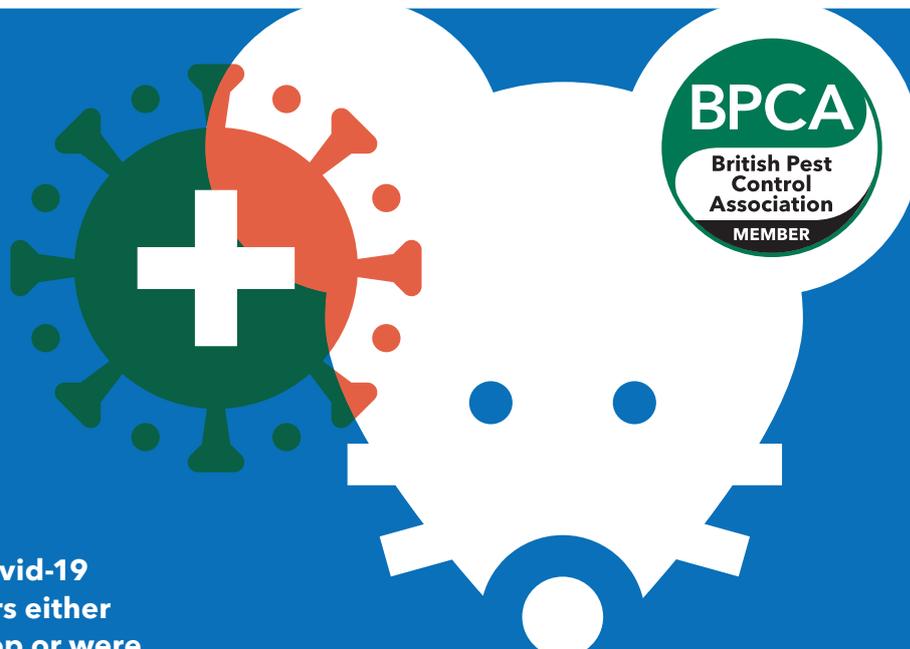
## Guidance for reopening your business after Covid-19 lockdown

Throughout the course of the Covid-19 pandemic, many business owners either took the decision to close up shop or were instructed to do so by the UK Government.

One of the biggest threats that many closed businesses will have to face is the possibility of a serious pest infestation, which may have established while their premises were left without any activity and unguarded from pests.

If you closed your business due to the pandemic and have been advised that you can reopen, this guide will take you through a step-by-step process to enable you to mitigate the potential risk of pest problems.

This guidance is for any business that has been closed for a period of time due to the Covid-19 pandemic. This, and support from your BPCA member company, should give you the confidence to reopen once it's safe to do so.



### SO, WHAT'S IN THIS DOCUMENT?

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COVID-19  
SECURE



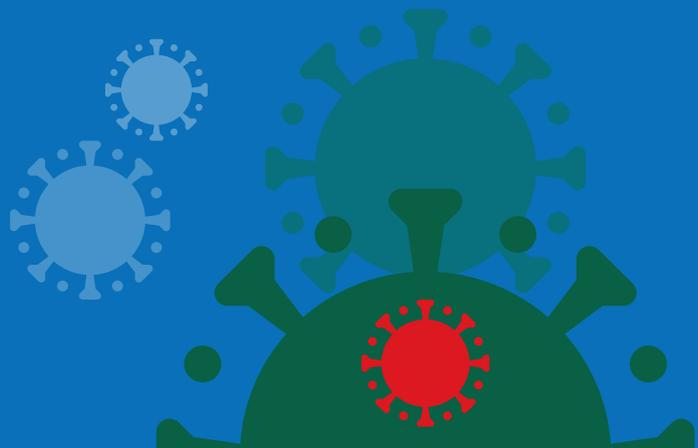
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# CAUSES OF INFESTATION

While closed, a lot of businesses have not considered the need for monitoring certain situations within their buildings that could, ultimately, lead to pest infestations.

Things like the lack of maintenance to structures, monitoring of general

conditions such as wastewater pipes and the possibility that something has been left behind unnoticed, like food items which could attract different pest species.

This may be from vertebrate pests (rodents etc) or even invertebrate pests (insects).

## DO I NEED PEST CONTROL?

Effective pest management is an essential element of health, safety and wellbeing.

It supports the provision of a safe and healthy facility, the maintenance of a welcoming and attractive environment and the protection of an organisation's reputation.

Insects, rodents and birds can easily contaminate food and work surfaces with potential pathogens that spread disease.

Pests also have the potential to damage your belongings, the building and, of course, reputations.

Organisations who regard pest control as a peripheral matter or an unnecessary expense are taking an unnecessary risk with their livelihoods.

## ARE YOU RUNNING A FOOD BUSINESS?



If you are, you will be aware that there are certain pieces of legislation

relating to your sector, most notably:

- Food Safety Act 1990
- Food Hygiene Regulations 2006.

These both state, in varying ways, that you must keep your premises free of pests.

If you return to business premises that have a pest infestation, then you will need to get it under control before you can begin to supply goods or serve food to the public.

Pests will contaminate surfaces that they have come into contact with, so you will need to do a thorough clean - talk to your pest control company, as they may provide this service for you.

Environmental Health Officers can also issue enforcement notices to business owners who don't have adequate pest management procedures in place. If not complied with, these can lead to fines or even a stint in jail and a criminal record.

Even if you don't run a food business, you still have a duty of care to your employees under the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974, to ensure a safe and pest-free work environment.

# THINGS YOU SHOULD ASK YOURSELF BEFORE REOPENING

## Did you do everything you should and could have done when you closed your business?

This should have included but not limited to:

### Safely securing all food sources from pests

If you are a food business which stores and sells dried food goods or those with long shelf lives, you may have left these in the building. Did you secure them in sealed containers and position them high off the ground?

Items such as packets or cartons of food could easily be accessed by rodents using their strong teeth to gnaw through the packaging. Once this happens, and the rodent realises there is a reliable food source there, they will return and probably in greater numbers.

### Check pest management equipment

Are fly screens and fly doors in place and in good condition?

With the hotter months upon us, insect species will be seeking out food sources. If your building is not protected properly you could find a lot of flies, both dead and alive, in your property when you return.

Electric Fly Killer (EFK) units need to be serviced regularly and the UV bulbs changed at least every 12 months. If not, the EFK won't work properly and your business could be at risk from flying insect pests.

### Cleaning and hygiene

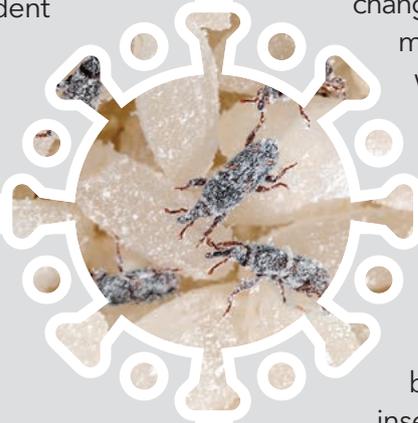
Was there a thorough clean down when production or work ceased? Did you check this was carried out to the required standard?

You should also ensure that bungs have been fitted to bins and that collections will take place as usual.

### Check access

Ensure that there is no easy access to your building for rodents or insects, such as gaps under external doors and shutters, broken air vents, and any other holes in the structure that are not supposed to be there.

With less footfall across cities and towns, rats will not have had the usual access to discarded waste, such as takeaways. With fewer opportunities for scavenging in the streets, this will mean that rats may now need to move further afield and into building that they normally would not.



# THINGS YOU SHOULD ASK YOURSELF BEFORE REOPENING

## Did you keep your pest management supply going during lockdown?

If you did then you should be in a good position to reopen safely.

If you stopped your pest management visits, then the worst-case scenario when reopening your business is that you discover a pest infestation that has been

given over three months of free time and space to feed, breed and damage your building and the contents within.

Here is an idea of how quickly the most common species of pests might be able to breed, in ideal environmental conditions.

### Brown rats (*Rattus norvegicus*)

With one breeding pair starting out their 'family' at the end of March, the population may look like this:



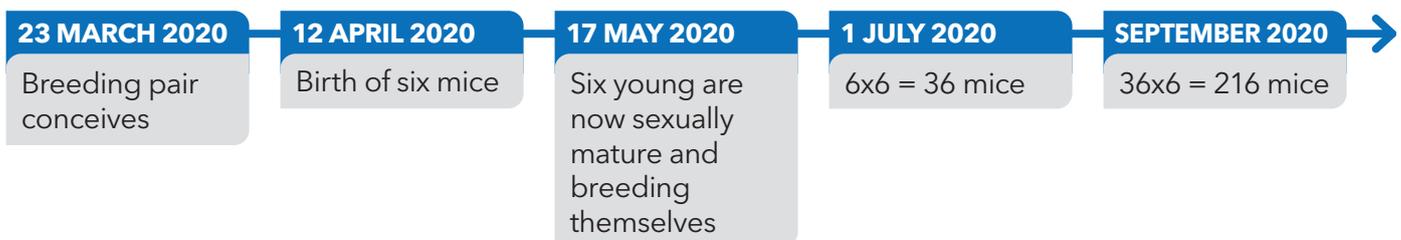
Although it takes a few months to reach this level, once it does the number really starts to climb. And this starts from just one breeding pair - you may have had a few breeding pairs.

Keep in mind that rodents can have a large 'family' with many breeding females, so if one rat finds a great food source and safe breeding spot, they are likely to bring their friends.



### House mouse (*Mus domesticus*)

The house mouse has a slightly quicker life cycle:



# THINGS YOU SHOULD ASK YOURSELF BEFORE REOPENING

## Have you regularly inspected your site for signs of activity?

If you haven't managed to keep your pest management routine visits going, then have you been visiting your business and building to carry out essential maintenance checks yourself?

If you have not, then it is recommended you start this as soon as possible. If you notice something unusual or any suspected pest activity, it is time to get your pest management

company in for a professional inspection, monitoring and, if needed, infestation control.

Signs of pest activity could include droppings, the smell of urine from rodents, eggs or shed skin from insects, damage to the exterior of the property around drains or other possible entry points, damage to internal fixings, and the most obvious sign - spotting the pest!

## Is there contamination of products, food or otherwise?

Labelled the world's 'most expensive pest', stored product insects cost the food industry billions each year in additional operational costs and lost product.

Spotting the signs of contamination from SPIs can be quite difficult if the infestation is in the early stages. It's best to have a pest management professional to do a thorough inspection.

The first sign of a stored product insect infestation is almost always the adult insect; moths flying around or small beetles in the cupboards.

Other signs are:

- Damage to packaging and products is a red flag - for example, weevils leave visible exit holes in grains, while moth larvae have chewing mouthparts which cause damage to food and packaging
- Moth larvae will also leave webbing, which they will spin as they feed and move through products; The webbing not only contaminates products but can also cause considerable damage to machinery and equipment
- SPIs will cause food to 'taint', which is visible as discolouration
- Infected grain tends to become warmer which can lead to damp, mould and even grain germination
- Track marks in dust or flour from adult insects is also a giveaway
- Frass is the excrement of insect larvae and is another common sign of an infestation.



## Contamination from SPIs isn't the only thing to look out for

Rodents are common and won't only damage the food they actually want; they will also gnaw through other packaging, as well as wood, cables and some soft metals.

This is because they need to gnaw regularly to keep their incisors from growing out of control. So if you notice damage to things that you feel doesn't make sense, it's probably because they are keeping up with personal care!

Any damaged stock will need to be isolated and disposed of.

And, unfortunately, this behaviour can cause serious damage such as burst water pipes, faulty electronics and, in rare circumstances, pose a fire risk.

If you have attic space with a cold water tank present, don't forget to inspect this too: there is a risk of squirrels contaminating this with droppings and urine.

# THINGS YOU SHOULD ASK YOURSELF BEFORE REOPENING

## Have you gone through this guide and ensured you have all the required measures in place?

If you have gone through this guide and taken the steps required for each question, then you should be relatively comfortable that you are safe to reopen.

However, we strongly advise that you involve your BPCA member pest management company at each step.

If you have a pest management company on the books, it's definitely time to have a conversation with them on the phone, to discuss what you need to do before reopening your business.

### **Pest management maintenance cycle**

The most effective method to ensure protection and compliance is to introduce a pest management maintenance cycle programme, with regular, targeted activity undertaken by a BPCA member.

A large part of pest prevention is thinking ahead to identify potential causes and entry points before infestations occur.

A professional contractor involved in a regular inspection programme will build a complete picture of effective preventative controls which can be introduced.

This will include inspecting premises on a routine basis and reporting on the status of pest infestation, organising and undertaking a programme of treatments, as well as using pest control equipment or chemicals to control and eliminate target pests.

The contractor will also report on all inspections, detailing the programme of treatments and the chemicals used on the premises to maintain health and safety.



# TOP TIPS FOR PREVENTING INFESTATIONS

There really is no substitute for good housekeeping when it comes to successful pest prevention.

Pests need three things to survive and thrive: food, water and safe harbourage (shelter). If you take away these crucial elements then pests will have no reason to stick around.

## Some top tips which will help deter pests from making themselves at home in your business premises...

**Keep bin lids sealed properly - even small gaps create easy access for pests.**

**Try to keep any food waste in the wheelie bin - only put non-food items into bin bags to keep pests away.**

**Don't leave leftover food lying around and empty kitchen containers into the composting bin on a regular or even daily basis.**

**Maintain a regular presence - if your business is remaining closed for now and footfall is down to zero, pests will feel more confident to explore those surroundings.**

**Where possible, keep bins away from windows and doors and, ideally, out of direct sunlight to help reduce smells and decrease the rate of decomposition.**

**Don't put loose food waste straight in the bin. Wrapping it in approved compostable liners, plastic bags or refuse sacks will ensure it doesn't stick to the sides of containers and will help contain any odours.**

**Check the exterior of your property - are there any gaps for pests to enter? Mice only need a gap of 5mm to gain entry (roughly the diameter of the eraser end of a pencil) and rats only need a gap of 15mm to gain entry to a structure.**

# QUICK CHECKLIST

This checklist of tasks should help you determine if you've done everything you can to ensure your business is pest-free and ready to reopen:

- Safely secure all food sources from pests
- Check access points are sealed
- Perform thorough cleaning and hygiene process
- Check condition of pest management equipment, eg fly screens
- Visit site to perform routine maintenance and pest activity check
- Follow pest prevention tips in this guide
- Conduct a back-to-work pest inspection with your pest management company
- Get a good pest management company on your books - find one in your area with [bpca.org.uk/find](http://bpca.org.uk/find)

## FURTHER GUIDANCE

Find more advice about reopening your business from the following:

Food Standards Agency  
[food.gov.uk/business-guidance/reopening-checklist-for-food-businesses-during-covid-19](http://food.gov.uk/business-guidance/reopening-checklist-for-food-businesses-during-covid-19)

Gov UK  
[gov.uk/guidance/working-safely-during-coronavirus-covid-19](http://gov.uk/guidance/working-safely-during-coronavirus-covid-19)



## WHY CHOOSE A BPCA MEMBER?

We're here to help thousands of individuals and businesses find a trusted pest control contractor every year. By choosing a BPCA member, you will get a company that

- Sends out qualified technicians
- Has the correct insurance in place
- Works legally and to our strict codes of conduct.

If you do not have a pest management company contracted to carry out inspections, pest prevention and control, then you can find a BPCA member company on our website at [bpca.org.uk/find](http://bpca.org.uk/find)

You can prevent infestations from getting out of control during this period if you continue with your pest management services where it's safe to do so.

## BE PROTECTED. PROFESSIONALLY.

Make sure your business will be safe to reopen once we get through this difficult time.

[bpca.org.uk/find](http://bpca.org.uk/find)

Driving excellence in pest management