



CASE STUDY

TEEING UP SUCCESSFUL PEST CONTROL

Delivering effective pest control at high-end golf properties is like mastering the game itself. It takes an inherent skill set combined with dedication to continually improve and adjust your craft to deliver the desired results.

Sprague Pest Solutions has been straight down the middle of the fairway when partnering with world-class golf properties to protect their food and beverage, clubhouse, and guest accommodations from a variety of pests.

CHALLENGES

The presence of pests in legendary golf properties is a triple bogey for management. First, it can threaten the safety and comfort of guests and second it can compromise the playing surfaces of the course. Finally, it can deliver a crushing blow to the brand reputation of these high-end properties that attract golf professionals and enthusiasts from across the globe.

The challenges come from the variety of pests that are encountered, the number of services required to prevent and mitigate issues, as well as the sheer size of the property, according to Scott Saia, Sprague's route manager who handles service for one such property in Oregon.

"We can treat bird mites one day, bed bugs in a guest room the next or ants in one of the kitchens the following visit. The weekly service visits are never the same," said Saia.

Sprague services nine different buildings on the property that include a hotel, guest cottages (there are more than 200 total rooms on the property), multiple food and beverage outlets and the golf pro shop and support buildings. The resort's mix of old and new construction also contributes to the challenge of keeping pests, especially rodents, from gaining access.

The rural, natural setting combined with the attraction of food, water and shelter offered by the resort's food and beverage outlets have resulted in more than 400 rodent control devices being deployed around the property.

Saia pointed to the challenge of keeping rodents out of the golf course superintendent's maintenance garage. Prior to Sprague taking over service for the property, mice had gained access to the garage and were gnawing on electrical wiring on the tractors and mowers used to maintain six championship courses.

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Route Manager, Sprague

In addition to the cost and inconvenience of having to repair the equipment, not being able to tend the greens, tee boxes and fairways at a championship level is a hard no go for the property that consistently ranks as one of the top public courses in the United States.

Sprague route manager Joe Escobar faces similar challenges with the natural environment at a high-end Washington state course providing the needed elements to support pest populations, especially mice. Flies and yellowjackets are also a seasonal issue near the course's restaurant.

"The mouse pressure around the course's maintenance shop, pump room and in the caddy shack can be an issue since doors are often left open and mice have an easy path inside," said Escobar.

SOLUTIONS

The pest management programs Sprague designed for both properties follow a holistic approach that accounts for the pest friendly natural environments that surround the area and increased pest pressure in the summer. The programs are also designed to deliver services with as little fanfare as possible.

"Their expectation is that pests need to be kept in check, especially in public areas," said Saia. "Even something small like spider webs around doorways or decks needs to be controlled. Brand protection is key."

A preventive approach is the backbone of both programs along with consistent communication to address client issues in a timely fashion.

"Taking care of the seasonal pest issues – ants, flies, stinging insects – top our monthly service calls," said Escobar. "Our history with the course lets us anticipate when and where pest issues will likely take place and allows us to get ahead of them."

Another element of the program is educating course employees on ways they can help reduce pest pressures. Escobar emphasizes the importance of good sanitation practices – washing out trash cans frequently, keeping dumpsters away from doors – and keeping doors and windows closed to deny pests' easy access.

RESULTS

The high profiles both courses have earned and enjoy means the success of a pest control program is measured both in low pest pressure and in brand protection. And Sprague has achieved both.

A video of a rodent in a restaurant or bed bugs in a guest room on social media or a travel review website can generate negative reviews and have financial implications; something the management for both properties want to avoid.

"Golf courses are a natural environment for pests, and it is our job to design programs that prevent pest threats before they become an issue and if an issue comes up to handle it quickly and with discretion," said Saia.

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COMMON PESTS FOUND AT GOLF PROPERTIES

ANTS

They may seem harmless and barely even noticeable, but they can quickly establish colonies in bunkers and other sandy areas, undermining their integrity and visual appeal. Ants can also be a nuisance around food service and dining areas.

BED BUGS

If the property has overnight accommodations such as a hotel rooms or guest cabins/villas, there is always a risk of bed bugs being introduced by the thousands of travelers who pass through.

BIRDS

While birds may add to the natural beauty of a golf course and the ambiance of playing in nature, they can also pose significant challenges. From scavenging for food to leaving droppings on greens and walkways, bird populations need careful management to strike a balance between coexistence and control.

FLIES

Outdoor dining is a feature virtually every golf course offers and if flies are present, it will not only be a nuisance to guests and staff but also present a food safety risk.

GOPHERS AND MOLES

These subterranean burrowing rodents are notorious for creating intricate tunnel systems that can disrupt the root and soil structure of the turf and the surrounding natural areas, leading to uneven surfaces and unsightly mounds. Their activity can pose a serious threat to the aesthetics and playability of the course.

RODENTS

Rats and mice are attracted to the abundant vegetation and food sources present on golf courses. The presence of rodents brings with it multiple disadvantages from sanitation and health concerns to property destruction to brand reputation damage.

STINGING INSECTS

An unplanned encounter with stinging insects can ruin a round of golf or outdoor dining experience.



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Scott Saia

Route Manage, Sprague