

# pest

The UK's independent pest management magazine



## Pest control takes flight



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**PRODUCT INNOVATIONS**  
Check out the 20-page supplement included in this issue

## How one Canadian pest control company handled the pandemic



Doug Smith, founder and president of Apex Pest Control Services, gives an insight into the pandemic, ahead of Canada's second wave

In many ways, we consider ourselves to be fortunate here in Ontario, Canada: As a country, we were able to flatten the curve of coronavirus cases by early summer, so our economy spent less time in 'shutdown' mode than more heavily affected countries.

With pest control considered an 'essential service', we weren't required to shut down completely at any point. However, from late March to mid-May, we definitely saw the business take a steep dive, and it really wasn't until July when we felt like we'd come through the worst of it.

Now that the kids have been back in school for a few weeks, we're seeing signs of the predicted 'second wave' of coronavirus cases, which means another wave

*A people-focused pest control business will be more likely to survive and thrive*

of small businesses struggling to stay afloat in the COVID-driven new normal.

Here's how we managed to get through that first part of 2020:

### REACH OUT TO THE PEST CONTROL COMMUNITY

There's an assumption that pest control companies are all hyper-competitive and cutthroat, willing to undermine their competitors in order to win business. That may be true in some areas, but it's not true for the leading companies here in southern Ontario where we operate.

The first thing we did when Canada went into lockdown was to reach out to the owners of other pest control companies in our area.

We agreed to help each other with things like PPE (initially in very short supply), labour (in the event that quarantining or COVID cases reduced our workforce) and supplies (some short-term supply chain disruptions threatened to cause shortages).

Just having the conversation

Apex worked with other pest control companies to ensure a good supply of PPE and other supplies



*Right from the beginning, we increased our communications efforts*

made a huge difference in the way we all faced the uncertainty of those early months.

### COMMUNICATION IS CRUCIAL, INTERNALLY AND EXTERNALLY

We've always believed that well-trained, well-paid and long-term technicians are the key to success. These are people we've invested in, that we care about – and that we want to keep as part of the Apex team, even though many of them work in the field on a day-to-day basis. Right from the beginning, we increased our communications efforts.

We kept them apprised of what was happening with the company, reassured them that we would be doing everything we could to retain their jobs, and made it clear we would be supportive of anyone who needed additional PPE or needed to take time off work to quarantine.

Our work is primarily with multi-family residential and commercial properties, so we also reached out to our clients, property managers and facility managers to help them create plans for ensuring their properties stayed pest-free. It's amazing how a little proactive communication can make everyone more resilient.

### STAYING CONSISTENT IS GOOD FOR THE BOTTOM LINE

One of the biggest challenges for businesses and individuals

throughout the pandemic has been the uncertainty. From masks to vaccines to supply chains and reopening, it's been hard to answer the question "What will next week look like?"

Our response to that has been to stay as consistent as possible, whether it's in finding ways to help our commercial clients stick to their existing pest-control schedules, managing our vendors to ensure we have adequate supplies of products, or staying supportive and responsive to employees.

That doesn't mean we haven't adapted where necessary, such as training technicians in best practices around PPE and disinfection or adjusting our treatment procedures to accommodate residents who can't leave the premises due to quarantining or lockdown.

For us, 'consistency' means sticking to our mandate of teamwork, relationship-building, and contributing to the industry.

### PEST CONTROL GOING FORWARD

Virus or no virus, there will always be a need for pest control. But the post-2020 pest control landscape, at least here in Canada, is likely to look a little different: the companies which are able to embrace a people-focused, less transactional approach to pest control will be more likely to survive and thrive.