

EPA'S NATIONAL BED BUG SUMMIT

Participant Recommendations

April 15, 2009

The goals of EPA's National Bed Bug Summit included encouraging communication among diverse stakeholders, and developing recommendations on how to address the myriad of problems posed by the bed bug resurgence. EPA achieved these goals through the effective use of EPA-facilitated workgroups.

During the afternoon of Tuesday, April 14th, Summit attendees were divided into ten workgroups. EPA assigned attendees to workgroups according to their affiliation in order to ensure that each group had a mix of professionals from pest control companies; universities; public health organizations; federal, state, and local government agencies; and others.

All ten workgroups were given the same assignment. They were to consider five topics:

1. Research
2. Role of Government (all levels)
3. Consumer Education and Communication
4. Pest Control Operator Education and Training
5. Role of Property Owners and Property Managers

For each of the five topics above, all ten workgroups were asked to:

- Identify the most significant factors contributing to the problem.
- Identify and discuss options and solutions.
- Identify their workgroup's recommendations.

EPA compiled the recommendations of all ten workgroups by topic. The compiled recommendations are provided in the five topic-specific text boxes, below. Wednesday morning (April 15), all Summit participants reconvened and together they reviewed the compiled recommendations for each topic. An open discussion session followed the review of each topic's compiled recommendations, and all participants were welcomed to share their views. A brief summary of the comments and discussion from these open sessions are also provided below for each topic.

Topic 1. Recommendations for Research (compiled from all ten workgroups)

Fund research: HUD, EPA, CDC, HHS, private industry
Form public-private partnerships
Formulate IPM strategies
Target research to develop solutions: products for humans, design improvements, study vectoring, luring, allergic reactions, population models, rapid assays for insecticide sensitivity, resistance, mode of behavior, disease transmission possibilities, alternate hosts, interaction with other insects
New and emerging technologies and techniques
Create a tracking system/clearinghouse for data (include PCO feedback)
Leverage existing sources of funding to include bed bugs
Demonstrate bed bugs are public health problem; impacts on society
Review past control strategies

Topic 1 -- Brief summary of comments and discussion from the open discussion session:

- Targeted research funding should include asthma. This will encourage CDC to include bed bugs as a public health pest. (Similar to cockroach data.)
- There should be a safety/occupational safety issue as well as a public health issue for bed bugs, due to loss of sleep for pilots, flight attendants, other professionals, etc.
- Species-specific considerations may be confusing. There needs to be clarification on bed bugs, bat bugs, and bird bugs, and whether it is appropriate to consider these separately, or as a common genus.
- IPM is a common thread. IPM research should also ensure that IPM is being practiced as it is intended to be. IPM is generally not used properly because it is not well understood. Do more research and develop better IPM education.
- Public health needs a more holistic definition. What is the regulatory mechanism for changing the public health definition, or broadening the definition to include overall wellness, mental health, etc.?
- There is a difference between public health issues and disease vectors. Joint EPA/CDC statement already recognizes that bed bugs are a pest of public health importance.
- Need to define IPM strongly. There should be a community-based component. There are already community-based IPM programs around cockroaches. Communities need to be involved at the beginning.
- CDC has not addressed the issue of bed bugs as possible disease transmitters. Existing data are equivocal. In-depth investigation of existing literature is needed.
- Specific RFPs do not address bed bugs. There is a need for bed bug-specific RFPs. There needs to be emphasis on very basic biology/behavior research for bed bugs.

Topic 2. Recommendations for the Role of Government (compiled from all ten workgroups)

Form interagency federal taskforce (EPA, CDC, HHS, etc.)
Involve all levels of government: collaborate, coordinate, cooperate
Create national foundation
EPA bed bug specific website
Legislative support: regulations for addressing recycled/refurbished mattresses; dealing with infested items
Legislation: bed bug certification for pest control operators
Provide funding: research, education, training
Provide subsidies for bed bug control: include underserved communities; utilize fine money as a source of funding
State regulations to clarify roles and responsibilities: tenants/owners/managers
Regulatory changes to streamline registration process; incentives for new products; encourage specialized uses; reevaluation of risk assessments to include risks of misuse
Recognize bed bugs as public health pest (classify as epidemic level)
Update efficacy guidelines for better testing procedures
Support IPM approach
Educate government officials and elected officials
Develop a response flow chart
Monitor and enforce products sold over internet: false claims, unregistered products
ASPCRO/other stakeholders establish national model legislation on bed bug management
Hold a Second Bed Bug Summit

Topic 2 -- Brief summary of comments and discussion from the open discussion session:

- In addition to education of government officials, there is a strong need to have these officials in the field and experience the reality of the bed bug situation. Aside from PCOs, many stakeholders have never actually seen a bedbug.
- Legislation for bed bug certification would be counterproductive. Professional association already has “self-policing” methods. Bedbug certification would be a burden to industry. Industry could create its own registration of Quality Pro. Certification is an unnecessary cost to PCOs.

Topic 2 -- Brief summary of comments and discussion from the open discussion session (continued):

- EPA should take more responsibility and a leadership role. Taxpayer dollars should not be used to address the problem. Solutions should start with EPA and not rely on cross-government cooperation.
- Should provide guidelines for workers in occupations with high chances of bedbug transport/transmission (e.g. firefighters, social workers, etc.).
- Possibility of bringing back old products. We need more effective chemicals. EPA needs to make it easier and cost effective for registrants to bring products back. Some products were lost not due to risk, but because of costs. Need economic incentives. Products can be targeted to bed bugs only to minimize risk, but then it is not cost effective. Less effective chemicals are applied more frequently. EPA should consider more efficacious chemicals that can be applied less frequently.
- Medical entomologists in North Carolina help oversee mattress recycling/reuse, bedding, and furniture. Need a working group to develop model legislation for states to used mattress sanitation efforts.
- Need for additional labeling requirements on mattresses and enforceable fines for mishandling.
- Need a well-funded core of change agents to implement IPM programs to empower people to carry out IPM for public health issues. Includes supporting state extension, but this is subject to USDA's mission. May need a separate environmental/public health extension service.
- There are laws in Virginia against selling used bedding and furniture but only 3 officials in the state of VA to enforce. VA requires a sanitizer permit for resale of used beds and furniture.
- Bed bugs need to be moved to top of the list. The word epidemic should be used cautiously...pandemic may be more appropriate.
- EPA should look at reduced-risk pesticides and OP alternatives for new uses, rather than new products.
- EPA and CDC should issue a specific statement regarding bed bugs being a public health problem, since this is unclear.
- Government should be wary of the burden posed by an additional/separate certification for PCOs to treat bed bug infestations.
- EPA regulations already exist, but the lawmakers don't understand what is involved in the pest management industry. Pest control in schools requires an IPM program.
- HUD should be included in the interagency federal task force.

Topic 3: Recommendations for Consumer Education & Communication (compiled from all ten workgroups)
Develop targeted bed bug education curriculum (i.e., children in schools, nursing homes, health care, hotel industry, medical professionals, dorms, home care providers, first responders)
Develop and disseminate information: identification, biology, prevention, safe treatment options, do's and don'ts, dispel myths, sanitary guidelines, best practices
Internet-based outreach/clearinghouse (i.e., factsheets, podcasts, key points in dealing with bed bugs)
Public service announcements: TV, web, radio, billboard, hotlines (multiple languages)
Collaborate at all levels (industry, associations, federal, state, local, etc.)
Multiagency website (EPA, GSA, CDC, HUD, HHS, DOT, FAA)
Mini bed bug summits in EPA regions
IPM training module

Topic 3 -- Brief summary of comments and discussion from the open discussion session:

- Should emphasize pictures of early development stages of bed bug. Most people are only familiar with pictures of adult bedbugs.
- An IPM training module for bed bugs has been developed by Pennsylvania IPM Program.
- Internet-based outreach should include blogs, Facebook, YouTube, and other popular media.
- 2nd Bedbug Summit should include all stakeholders.
- Consumer education should focus on a long-term goal of having residents/"hosts" be partners of pest management. Need a "demand-side" IPM rather than "supply-side." Pesticide dependence leads to pesticide resistance.
- Educational materials should include guidance on detection of low-level infestations and early intervention.
- Need to reconsider USDA extension services as partners. USDA does have healthy housing outreach. Infrastructure already exists and should be taken advantage of.
- Mandatory education of property managers through webinar. Local PCOs provide information to communities with ongoing bedbug issues.
- Extension agents largely do NOT deal with public health pests. The majority deal with agriculture, although only a small percentage of the population is engaged in agriculture. Extension should be reevaluated to meet the needs of the general population.
- California is working with consumer education partners who already do lead education and other outreach activities. The outreach infrastructure already exists, and bed bug materials can be distributed through these means.
- The term IPM is not clear to the public, and in many cases, excludes the use of any pesticides. This has made it difficult for PCOs to treat infestations. The definition of IPM should make it clear that all available tools should be utilized, starting with low-risk tools, but not excluding other options.

Topic 4: Recommendations for PCO Education & Training

(compiled from all ten workgroups)

Standardize PCO training (national training standards)

Implement pesticide applicator certification for bed bug category

Mandate IPM certification for bed bug control

Consider licensing funds to support research and education

Establish voluntary standards for accreditation (specialist)

Dedicated bed bug CEUs

PCO self-reporting: illegal products, misapplications, statistics

Topic 4 -- Brief summary of comments and discussion from the open discussion session:

- Manufacturers should be partners in education. Some manufacturers have their own certification programs. Manufacturers are in a good position to educate PCOs on product use.
- PCO and customers need to develop a relationship. Public-relations training is needed for PCOs.
- Certification should be voluntary and run by trade associations or PCO industry. A National Association should be a clearinghouse for such information.
- Education of PCOs is inconsistent. Additional certification would be a burden for competent applicators. Continuing education, rather than an isolated certification course, is key.
- Numerous specialty certifications makes it difficult to address problems in a holistic manner.
- Universal technicians do a variety of tasks. A bedbug certification/accreditation will help companies specialize.
- NPMA has Quality Pro programs that provide certifications that are inexpensive.
- Additional bedbug certification is a “green light” for consumers. It helps consumer locate qualified PCOs. An accreditation is a tool for consumer protection.
- Third-party certification programs (Green Shield and EcoWise) can add bed bug programs to the list of already existing programs.
- Certification programs are too easy and do not measure actual PCO knowledge and skills. Rather than add additional categories, the existing categories should be more stringent.
- Clarify whether certification is for company or individual applicator.
- PCOs have an obligation to apply materials properly and educate customers.
- Certification should be based on a foundation of research. Certification for detection dogs is based on 10-years of research from University of FL.
- PCO certification will drive up operating costs; money is already a burden for public housing.
- Certification will affect different income classes in different ways. May be more of a benefit to those who are burdened by costs.
- Certification is a non-issue if bed bugs are recognized as a public health pest. Public health pest certification already exists.
- NYC Health Department has voluntary certification. Consumers can still find certified applicators, but the certification is not mandatory.

Topic 5: Recommendations for the Role of Property Owners and Managers
(compiled from all ten workgroups)

Training of owners, staff, managers; outreach and notification to tenants
Provide action plan: proactive, inspections, training
Education (fact sheet), communication, training for tenants
Awareness of IPM practices
Hold property owners responsible for treatment and/or for known infestations (legal responsibility)
Share cost of abatement: partnerships
Help with legislation: funding, disposal of infested items
Require licensed PCO application including owners
Certification for property owners

Topic 5 -- Brief summary of comments and discussion from the open discussion session:

- Educate property managers about how to hire quality PCOs. “You get what you pay for.”
- Property owners and managers have the power to impose or remove stigma. Property managers need to encourage openness about reporting bed bug problems.
- Request for clarification: What is meant by certification for property owners? Response: That owners must be certified PCOs to treat their property.
- Give out ratings/grades/stamps to indicate the quality or vigor of pest management strategies taking place on a particular property.
- Create certification or guidance for property managers to do inspections and ensure that properties are bedbug-free between tenants.
- PCOs and health departments should be involved in training property managers.
- Units need to be inspected before they are vacated so infestations can be treated while the “host” is still present.
- Residents are a problem and are sometimes unwilling to cooperate or engage in behaviors to manage pests.
- Preventative and ongoing inspection is necessary to address the problem, however this is difficult to do in hotels, dormitories, and private apartments because residents and property managers do not cooperate or do not consider pest inspections to be a priority.