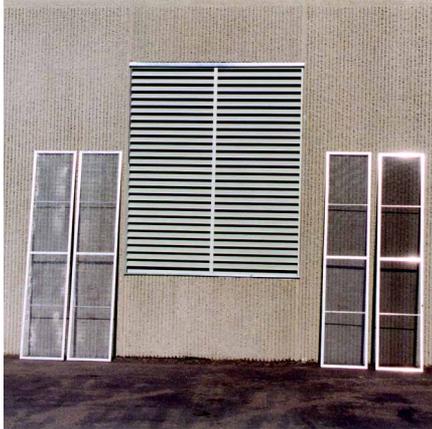


# Screening **OUT** Pests

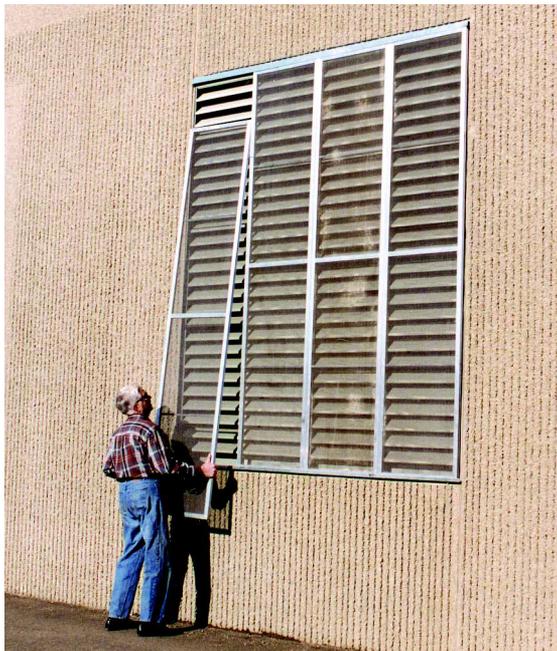
Utilizing screened dock doors is an important piece of the IPM puzzle for quality assurance professionals. *By Darlene Taylor*



In the food processing, handling and distribution arena, successful integrated pest management (IPM) programs aren't a luxury – they're a necessity. IPM is not defined by a single action; it consists, according to the National Integrated Pest Management Network, of minimized pesticide usage, more educated environmental decisions, and methods that can be repeated to prevent pests or obtain acceptable levels of pests in a facility. In fact, many insecticides and pest control products previously employed are being phased out due to the Food Quality Protection Act of 1996, making innovative IPM methods even more relevant today than in the past.

**IPM OPTIONS.** Piecing together various non-chemical pest control measures to form a solution is integral to an IPM program's success. The goal of repelling pests and barring entry is essential because the food-processing environment provides the three elements that all pests need for survival: food, water and shelter.

Once pests are established in a facility, they can cause damage by contaminating product, which could lead to monetary



(Above) The Bug Blocker Air Inlet Screen Panel prevents pests from gaining access to a structure. The panel is easily installed using special brackets. (Right) An overhead screen door system can be added to a food plant's existing overhead door system.



loss and even regulatory action. Facilities, together with licensed pest management firms, must determine the viable IPM methods to best protect the product and the environment. The three most common pests found in food-processing facilities are rodents, cockroaches and flies. Depending on a facility's geographic location or products handled, additional pests also may be present.

Various approaches to the exterior and interior of a plant are universal. Following the inspection and identification of

pests, different areas may be targeted for IPM measures. For instance, trash and refuse areas should be moved at least 50 feet from any openings of the building, and maintained in a sanitary manner. This discourages pests by removing a food source, and limits their ability to freely move from the garbage area into the building. Similarly, moving lighting away from entranceways or switching to sodium vapor lighting will attract fewer flying insects.

Even with the best exterior IPM meth-

ods, however, pests will still be attracted to a facility. The next line of defense to employ is screened dock doors. In fact, in addition to providing pest deterrence, screened dock doors are mandated by a 2002 Food Safety and Inspection Services (FSIS) document entitled, "FSIS Security Guidelines for Food Processors." In part, it reads, "Loading dock doors will need to be down, locked and in good working order. If the doors need to be opened for ventilation purposes, a securable overhead gate or overhead screen door will need to be installed and locked in the down position to prevent entry through that door position."

**DOCK DOORS & IPM.** One manufacturer of screened dock doors, Rasco Industries Inc. of Hamel, Minn., also stresses the importance of food industry institute ratings. "Our products have become increasingly more important to companies trying to improve their American Institute of Bak-

### WASP PROBLEM PROMPTS INNOVATION

A pest infestation provided the spark that produced the first screened dock door system developed by Rasco Industries. "The idea for the product was initially conceived after several employees in another business were severely stung by wasps while at their work stations. This happened in the fall," says Rick Brown, "when the wasps go a little crazy after feasting on fermented apples."

After extensive research, no existing product on the market could address the issue of needed ventilation, security and pest control, so Rasco Industries was established. "We began our engineering design work in 1990 and began shipping the first overhead screen doors in 1992," Brown states. Thus, a company was born due to drunken wasps.

ing (AIB) or American Sanitation Institute (ASI) ratings or trying to effectively implement a non-chemical pest control program,” states Rick Brown, vice president of sales and marketing for Rasco. “The AIB Consolidated Standards for Food Contact Packaging Manufacturing Facilities now states, ‘All dock doors used for ventilation shall have tight-fitting screen doors to aid in pest control.’”

Brown said the initial offering from Rasco featured a 12-mesh (12 wires per inch) aluminum construction that proved sufficient in repelling birds, rodents and most insects. Unfortunately, the aluminum did not withstand heavy industrial use,



Installation of screened dock doors is a relatively easy process.

age, and stainless steel was quickly substituted. Consequently, after a year, Rasco was contacted by AIB. “They noted there were certain facilities that used rice, grain or flour on the premises that needed infestation protection against much smaller classes of insects, like sawtoothed grain beetles and lesser grain beetles, among others,” Brown says. That led to the development of the 30-mesh screen.

Installation of screened dock doors can be accomplished by utilizing the existing hard door system, or a second track can be added. For ventilation purposes, the dual track is more advantageous since the hard door can be opened while the screened door

prevents pest entry. Additionally, brush bristles on the sides of the screened door seal any gaps, again preventing pests from entering. Existing door systems can be retrofitted whether the openings are vertical lift, high lift, standard lift or side sliding.

As with any IPM measure, effective use must be maintained to ensure positive results. If dock doors are opened without the screened doors in place, a breach in protection could lead to pests entering the facility. Communication with dock and warehouse workers must focus on the importance of constant adherence to the screened door policy. Additional IPM measures, such as traps or general sanitation standards usually exist within the interior of the building, but the screened dock door is a critical component of any integrated pest management program designed to deny pests access to a food-processing facility. **QA**

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