

A Day in the Life of a Pest Controller

It's been quite a few years now since I started out on a career in pest control and there have been quite a few humorous experiences along the way. Most of the funny stories probably come from Bermuda, where I ran a company for seven years. Most of the people I dealt with were city folk from the USA, Canada or UK. Large insects were often unknown to them.

One Large Jumper

One evening I received a call from a near-hysterical Canadian lady; all I managed to get was her address and SPIDER!!! I arrived, calmed her down and extracted this tale from her. Her husband was off the island on business and while watching TV she decided to close the curtains. In Bermuda there are lots of insects, some large, some very small. Amongst the large ones are jumping spiders, so called because they spin no web and actively hunt and are fond of hiding in the curtain folds. When the curtains were drawn, out jumped a startled spider, right onto the lady's face! Hence the hysteria, in the confusion this particular spider had hidden somewhere in the room. Jumping spiders have a 2 - 3 inch leg span but can get into very small spaces; try as I might I could not find this one and the lady in question was not about to let me leave while it was still at large. The only thing to do was to fumigate the room and the spider was flushed out. The lady was so relieved that we set up a regular monthly



service the very next day and if her husband had disagreed I think divorce or murder would have been on the cards! It was not unusual to find rats in bedrooms at night; two species are prevalent on the island, the Norway rat, which is the rat common to the UK and the black rat (*rattus rattus*), which is the plague rat from the medieval period and is very common in Bermuda. They are very agile and climb well, hence their other name roof-rats. They can often be seen crossing from buildings to trees using overhead power cables. They enter through any opening during the evening and hide. When all is quiet they resume their nocturnal wanderings and often wake the occupant of the room, which is when all hell breaks loose and my phone would ring.

Frizz Versus Ratty

The easiest way to deal with these troublesome intruders was to take Frizz, my Jack Russell terrier, still with me though rather aged at 16, but still 100% terrier. Taking up his position on bed or sofa while I moved the furniture, Frizz would wait for ratty to make a break and would usually get him too. Even when I was the one to catch the rat Frizz paraded around taking all the credit. Another regular customer called and said there was a rat in her bathroom; she had closed the door and could I come and get rid of it? I squeezed into the small bathroom, closing the door tightly behind me - no chance of the rat escaping that way. The window was closed and all was neat and tidy *Continued on page 11*

but there was nothing there! Perhaps she meant her husband's bathroom? Nothing there either; I called her to check and she was adamant that it was in there. Back inside for another check, no holes or gaps and nowhere to hide, or so I thought. Just as I was about to leave, I squeezed the lower fold of a towel and there it was lying in its own personal hammock! I was recently called to destroy some bees in a local roof. There were two dormer windows and the bees had been there for years, so long that the previous owners had made permanent provision to kill the bees. A short pipe with a screw fitted through the ceiling; when the bees became troublesome they unscrewed the cap, poured in some insecticide and hey presto! No more bees. The problem is that it leaves the honey behind so any passing swarm will take up residence. The only way to resolve this problem is to remove the honey, kill the scent and make the roof 'bee proof'. We agreed to open the ceiling to remove the honey and wax; the builders renovating the house would put it all back as it was. So down with the ceiling, plenty of plastic sheeting and a scraper, unfortunately gravity takes over and once the job is

started it needs to be finished. After about 40 minutes I looked like a treacle sponge and there was so much honey, wax and dead bees on the sheeting that I couldn't lift it. Commandeering one of the builders and with much effort we got it all into the skip, a quick shower under the hosepipe for me and then back to do the other one, which was much bigger.

Treacle Sponge

I always feel guilty when doing this type of work because of the terrible waste; there must have been a good 100 - 150 lbs of honey from each hive, but of course it was no good because it had been treated with insecticide. If possible I remove the swarms and pass them on to a local beekeeper who is always very glad of them. Back to clearing the other lot, the holes in the ceiling were temporarily covered and, looking like a treacle sponge again it was back under the hose for me!! Thank heaven for a proper hose at home

Well; it was all in a day's work, but luckily not a very common one.

David Hayes

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Shipton Fete

At 9 am we were surveying an empty field and hall and looking at the clouds overhead. "I **think** we will be alright." said Martin. By 2pm the field and hall were set up, the vintage cars in their place and people were arriving. The sun shone as Robert Marsh the Youth Club leader declared the Fete 'Open'.

We had over forty stalls and attractions, plus many local organisations with their information stands. At 3.30, we **agreed** that there is something special about a village fete, it's not only the various

stalls, games and activities, it is a chance to see old friends, have a chinwag and catch up on the news. At 5pm, we **knew** it had been a good fete with plenty of locals and visiting holidaymakers. By 6 pm, the site was clear!

Over £3,000 was raised for local charities and organisations and the fete committee were able to make donations totalling £900 to Seesaw, The Lady Reade Foundation and Tearfund.

A big 'thanks' to all who contributed!

Martin Gibbs and Gordon Halliday