

Pest Control in Schools

Schools provide proper environment for students to learn and study; they are places with a high concentration of people, especially children and teenagers. On the other hand, school campuses may also be places suitable for the breeding of various pests which affect public health. Pest will be found if the environment provides favourable food sources, shelters and breeding places. Therefore, pest control is an unavoidable issue in schools. Though applying pesticides is a speedy method to solve pest problem in urgency, proper management of the environment and maintenance of good sanitary conditions are the ultimate and long-term solutions.

The following information aims mainly to provide general reference on common pest problems in schools and their controls.

Common Public Health Pests that may Infest Schools

1. Cockroaches

Most schools are equipped with kitchens or pantries, where the school staff prepares lunch for students or makes some simple food preparations. Tuck shops, which provide snacks for students, are also part of the facilities in many schools. These places are in high risk of cockroach infestation since foods are always present. Besides, dining areas, rooms where students have cookery lessons, as well as refuse collection areas in the campus would also have cockroach problems if the places are not properly cleansed or managed. Special attention should be given to these areas to avoid cockroaches.

2. Mosquitoes

In school areas, mosquito breeding mainly occurs in places with accumulations of water. These include surface drainage channels surrounding buildings and open playgrounds, garden corners where potted plants are placed, and offices where flowers/plants are kept. To avoid mosquitoes, stagnant water found in school campus should be eliminated the soonest.

3. Houseflies

Houseflies are mainly attracted by food, decaying organic matters and

rubbish, etc. Therefore, tuck shops and kitchens where foods are available, rubbish bins and refuse collection areas where food remnants can be found, as well as drains where excrements or sewage are not properly removed, are the major attraction points to houseflies. The most effective permanent solution to control fly nuisances in schools is to eliminate these attractions. Proper storage of food, complete wrapping of rubbish and good drainage systems do help keep flies away.

4. Rodents

Whenever food sources and sheltering places are available in the campus, rodents may find it favourable to move in. Generally speaking, commensal rodents would feed on any human food. Common hiding places for rodents in schools include flower beds, covered portions of surface drainage channels, accumulated articles/junk and weep holes on retaining walls, and so on. To prevent rodent infestation, the best method is to deprive them of food and hiding places. In addition, denial of access for rodents from outside by adopting rodent proofing measures is vital in keeping schools free of rodents.

When you find pests infesting school areas, you can contact the district pest control section of the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department or appoint a private pest control company to carry out pest control work for you.

Remember, the ultimate solution to pest problem is to keep the environment at a high sanitary standard. An integrated pest management programme can help prevent and control pests in a more effective and efficient way.

Very often the appointed private pest control company makes use of pesticides to contain pest problems in schools. As pesticides are chemicals with certain degree of toxicity, great care must be taken in selecting a pest control company for carrying out pesticidal treatment in schools.

Points to Note in Carrying out Pesticidal Treatment in Schools by Private Pest Control Operators

When appointing a private pest control company...

Request the pest control company to

- carry out survey before applying pesticides;
- use pesticides which are registered in Hong Kong;
- select pesticides with active ingredients of lower toxicity and effectiveness at low doses;
- provide information on the pesticides that will be used, including active ingredients, target species as well as the method of application;
- provide details of the procedures of their work;
- provide information on precautionary and safety measures as well as post-treatment work; and
- conduct pest control work after school hours or during school holidays.

Before the commencement of pesticidal treatment, the school staff should

- inform nearby occupants, if any, in case of carrying out large-scale insecticide application;
- remove all foodstuffs and cooking utensils in the area to be treated;
- switch off all the central air-conditioning systems for the area to be treated until the advised re-entry time; and
- ensure nobody, except the operator, stay in the area during treatment.

After the pesticidal treatment, the school staff should

- enter the pesticide-treated area only after the advised re-entry time;
- well-ventilate the area by opening windows and/or doors leading outdoors;
- remove any dead insects after the pest control work; protective clothing such as gloves must be worn in doing this; and
- allow students to enter the pesticide-treated area only after the advised re-entry time and the area has been swept and/or properly cleansed.

The above are only some of the general guidelines on safety measures that should be taken in pesticidal treatment. The school staff should consider and carry out precautionary and safety measures as advised by the appointed pest control operator to ensure the pest control work is

carried out smoothly and safely.

In Case of Body Contaminated with Pesticides

Pesticide on the skin

- Wash contaminated body parts at once with plenty of water and soap.

Pesticide in the eye

- Rinse the eye immediately with a gentle stream of clean water for 15 minutes or more with the eyelids open.

Symptoms of pesticide poisoning

- feeling weak and tired
- excessive sweating
- vomiting
- dizziness and confusion
- difficulty with breathing
- skin irritation
- abdominal pain and diarrhoea
- headache
- blurred vision
- muscle twitching
- extreme salivation
- itching and burning of eyes
- narrowed (pin-point) pupils
- unconsciousness

Consult your physician as soon as possible if your body is contaminated with pesticide or if pesticide poisoning is suspected! Avoid spending too much time on doing first aid by yourself.

Should you have any questions relating to the public health pest problems and their control, please feel free to contact the **Pest Control Advisory Section** of the **Food and Environmental Hygiene Department** at **2319 8224**.

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