

## Expert Opinion

### 5 Ways to Beat Heat Treatment Risks

By John Culotta

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Thermal heat treatment has emerged as the most effective way to eradicate bed bugs, providing more consistent results than either pesticides or freezing. Plus, some of the early concerns about heat treatments (namely, property damage) have been addressed as pest management professionals (PMPs) refine their methods.

We are seeing fewer claims for property damage related to heat treatment. However, property owners do occasionally sue PMPs after a heat treatment, and we have identified key areas where PMPs went wrong. Based on our experience, we offer five recommendations to help prevent claims.

**1. Make sure you buy your heating equipment from manufacturers who have a good reputation and who offer training.** The operating manual is not enough. You need training to ensure you are using the equipment correctly. In addition, if there is a claim against you for property damage, your defense may be to argue that the manufacturer is partly responsible for some of the losses.

**2. Your manufacturer's training should cover what the customer is responsible for removing from the house, and how the customer should reintroduce items into the house.** For example, you don't want customers to remove any items that may contain bed bugs from a room. When they reintroduce it to the room, they will bring the pests back with them.

**3. Monitoring the correct temperature is critical to your success.** You must set the optimal temperature, spread the heat throughout the affected areas, and maintain a steady temperature to be successful. The temperature must also be closely monitored throughout the entire process.

**4. As with any bed bug treatments, we recommend that your contract clearly state that there are no guarantees, and that multiple treatments may be required.** While heat is proving to be more successful than other treatments, every PMP knows how difficult bed bugs can be to eradicate. Manage expectations carefully when you speak with customers ... and in your contracts.

**5. In your contract, you should also state that you are not responsible for any property damage due to the treatment.** This contract language gives you a better chance of defending yourself successfully, as your client knows what and what not to expect right from the start.

The emergence of thermal heat treatments as an effective treatment is good news for every PMP who has battled bed bugs. By following the five steps above, you can ensure even better success and protect yourself against customer claims.

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### Look again at heat treatment

In this March 2004 Tech Watch column, industry consultant Dean Stanbridge examines how heat can be used as an effective pesticide alternative for a variety of insects.

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