

When you discover an infestation within vending equipment.



Background

While cases of infestation of vending equipment by pests are rare it is important that member companies have procedures in place for dealing with them when they are reported by operators, engineers or clients.

Whatever the particular pest involved, cockroaches, mice, mites, flies, ants or moths, to give the most likely examples, these incidents are unpleasant. Sometimes they are reported by the client, sometimes they only become apparent when operators or engineers wish to service the machine.

The first thing to note is that the equipment is only the environment that the pests have chosen to colonise; chosen because they offer sheltered, warm, dark and moist conditions with high concentrations of available food. The equipment itself is not the initial cause of the problem.

Whilst the infestation will almost certainly be centred on the ingredients within the machine, as these provide a sugar rich ready food source, we are not aware of any instance where they have been introduced in or by them.

When infestation is discovered, the action needed depends on the pest involved.

Infestation with rodents or cockroaches

The pests constitute a health hazard and the issue should be taken very seriously. First, the manager of the premises should be made aware of the problem. The machine should not be touched until the problem is resolved professionally. Operators and engineers should not put themselves at risk by attempting to clean or service the machine until the infestation is cleared.

When infestation is identified in a food business, that business will take responsibility for resolving the problem. As part of their food safety management plan they should already have a pest control policy with a pest contractor in place.

Where the issue is in a non-food business, the responsibility for resolving the problem still lies with the client but the vending operator may need to suggest the solution.

At some point, to be agreed with the pest control company, it will be necessary to remove all ingredients and discard them. Once the machine and the surrounding area is free of the pests, the machine should be stripped down and steam cleaned.

Infestation with ants, flies or moth

Ants are attracted by food and can be found infesting machines placed too close to a door. Flies are attracted to waste food and are found where waste bins are not emptied frequently enough. Moths are found in stored food which is undisturbed. If these insects are found in a machine, the source of the problem should be identified and remedial action taken, for example moving the machine further away from the door or from waste food bins.

Automatic Vending Association

Concept House, Cromwell Office Park, York Road, Wetherby, LEEDS LS22 7SU

the-ava.com

Tel: +44 (0) 3300 883 267

When you discover an infestation within vending equipment.



Once this has been done, affected ingredients should be removed and the surfaces of the machine that have had contact with the insects should be brushed thoroughly cleaned with hot water and detergent and then sanitised and dried. The machine should then be flushed out to make sure that there are not any insects in the rest of the pipework.

Infestation with mites

Mites are sometimes found in machines, usually on the fascia where they stand out as white specks. There are many types of mite and, while it is possible to identify which sort they are, this is expensive and makes no difference to the treatment. These insects will not pose a hazard to health but are a concern to customers. They are seen on the fascia but can move from fascia to ingredient areas. Initially an attempt should be made to remove them by vacuuming the front and ingredient areas of the machine. (They will not be killed by washing with sanitiser.) If this does not work, the options are to remove the machine, but not take it to the operator's premises where the mites may migrate to another machine, but to a place where the machine can be disassembled sufficiently to permit treatment. Treatment options are either vacuuming all possible hiding places or shrouding in plastic and lighting a small insecticide smoke bomb on the floor. Suitable smoke bombs are available to amateur users. They do not leave an unsafe residue in the machine, which should then be cleaned and returned to service.

The above process is usually effective both in dealing with the client and treating the machine. However, should the mites return the client should be advised to engage the services of a pest control company to try to identify the source of the problem.

Revised May 2020