NPMA Bed Bug Blue Ribbon Task Force
Honolulu, HI
October 22, 2010

Meeting Notes

I. Introduction

The meeting began at 4pm Eastern time in conjunction with the NPMA PestWorld 2010 Meeting at the Hawaii Convention Center in Honolulu, HI. Members of the bed bug blue ribbon task force were asked to introduce themselves followed by the other meeting attendees.

Bob Rosenberg opened up the meeting by:

- Discussing NPMA bed bug related activities (including eight previous meetings, personnel trained, bed bug hub, technical materials, webinars, surveys, policies, research, etc.). This included short presentations by Missy Henriksen on messaging and Gene Harrington on policy.

- Discussing the goals of the task force (i.e., development of a comprehensive, proactive industry plan to address the bed bug pandemic)

II. General Discussion

Following introductions and the opening, members of the task force were asked to provide any general comments that they had regarding the mission of the committee and whether the questions posed in the "scoping document" captured the full range of issues the task force needed to address.

Scott Steckel asked NPMA staff if they had conducted outreach with state associations to gauge what they were doing on a local level. Staff responded that they were in communication with state associations and had attempted to include a comprehensive representation of state leadership on the bed bug task force so that input from these groups would be incorporated.

Judy Black asked if there was to be a bed bug credential what the standards would look like.

Doug Stern felt that best practices to treat for bed bugs should be developed by the committee and if they were how you could qualify good work, products, standards, etc.

Bob Kunst informed the committee that some bed bug work can lead to litigation (similar to termites) and questioned whether the industry needed to develop treatment standards or best practices.

Tami Stuparich shared experiences from her community resulting in client confusion. She noted some clients are asking for ways to identify companies that accurately treat for bed bugs.

Steve Doggett explained that best practices are needed for the industry because you can't mandate treatment methods because of the multitude of ways of completing bed bug work. He also asked the committee what the financial impact of bed bugs were in the U.S.

Andrew Klein responded to Mr. Doggett that he didn't know the impact of the market. He stated that companies can treat for bed bugs, however the structure could be re-infested and may need a second treatment for a completely separate problem. Mr. Klein asked how can companies best control bed bugs if there is no magic bullet. More communication with customers is the best way to understand the problem and the extent of customers' needs.

Marty Overline: The industry needs to take the integrated pest management approach and include the entire array of tools to treat for bed bugs, including, dogs, chemicals, heat, freezing, etc.

Steve Kells felt that socioeconomic factors played a big role in the treatment for bed bugs.; He indicated we might need to develop multiple levels of best practices for each of the different levels of socio-economic clients that face bed bug infestations because of the various cost structures involved.

Todd Leyse felt that PMP's become like psychologists for their clients to answer questions about bed bugs. He said that he has run into situations where they have been the folks who are called for answers about bed bugs particularly by the travel industry.

Mark Sheperdigian wanted to echo Dr. Kells. He wanted to know what homeowners and low income consumers do on their own. Was there a need to set guidelines or best practices for do it yourself treatment methods.

Chris Arne explained that some hotels are beginning to treat for bed bugs on their own. Some accounts have bought heat machines which should also be a consideration.

Matt Nixon felt that NPMA should work to protect its members from liability from bed bugs (developing contracts, etc.)

Phil Cooper said that his brother Rick Cooper was working on research on the socio-economic impact of bed bugs.

Doug Stern questioned whether the industry needs best practices for treatment methods but possibly a separate certification for the use of dogs.

Mr. Arne felt that the key to any best practices was thoroughness.

Ms. Black said that the client was concerned most if the treatment/service has actually worked and that best practices would be hard to define but the end result should be success.

Richard Stevenson felt that education and preemptive programs, notification to the client should be included in the best practices.

III. Specific task force projects

Mr. Rosenberg summarized the group's response and stated that it sounded as if industry best practices should be developed as opposed to a certification for pest management companies. Members of the committee confirmed that this would be the best step forward. Mr. Rosenberg confirmed that the first step of the committee would be to work on the development of BMP's.

Alfie Treleven felt that people outside the industry are becoming significant players in the bed bug industry and that any best practices developed by this committee should be provided to all other entities.

Mark Weaver asked how consumers could identify a good pest management company and what they should be looking for when hiring a firm to treat for bed bugs.

Mr. Rosenberg asked that the group to discuss inspection and monitoring standards. He informed the group that Lois Witherington of the NPMA Canine Inspection Detection Division (CIDD) was in the process of working on standards for K-9's that inspect for bed bugs.

Andrew Klein said that K-9's can be more efficient and effective if there was a credential. Customers are confused with different results that are reported by K-9's.

Dr. Kells said that he felt it would be best to develop best practices for the industry and treatment methods but that K-9's should have a real standard are credential.

Mr. Kunst felt that best practices should be specific to sites. Multi-family housing and other specific accounts should have different standards. He felt these would also help PMP's to market to these accounts.

Mr. Rosenberg summarized that, based on discussion, it appeared there were two items that needed to be created including:

1. Best Management Practices for preventative services, treatment and follow-up
2. Certification/Standards for K-9's when doing bed bug inspections

It was suggested the term "protective services" or something similar be considered instead of "preventative".

Bob Rosenberg asked the group if a bed bug credential would be needed in the future.

Mark O'Hara felt that we should start by creating best practices since a credential would be a very big process to write.

Mr. Treleven agreed with Mark that a credential is a big project to undertake. He felt that best practices should first be written which could potentially lead to a credential in the future.

Mr. Cooper felt that as BMP's and standards were being written, the committee and association should also focus on policy.

Mr. Leyse felt that the timeline to first develop BMP's was good, however the industry did need some kind of credential so that consumers could identify a good pest management company to provide treatment.

Mr. Kells said that testing and training would be needed for a credential. He gets many calls from folks on who to call for bed bugs and he sends people to the pestworld.org zip code locator website. He doesn't want NPMA members to do a poor job or that would reflect poorly on him. He asked if it would be possible to include a bed bug credential within QualityPro.

Mr. O'Hara said that bed bugs were in a class of their own because companies are desperate to show themselves as reliable. He also said that a credential would be hard to create because it would be changing so fast and that it must be a living document.

Mr. Stevenson said that credentialing will happen from some group and he would very much like to see it as a part of QualityPro. He lost count on the number of licenses that are needed to different types of pest control and would therefore rather see it as a separate pest specific regulation by states.

Jeff Springer felt that if NPMA and the industry did not create a credential then some other group would.

Lois Witherington felt that BMP's would be good for technicians.

Mr. Kunst said that we need a certified treatment and not a different license or code. BMP's should include a certified treatment.

Mr. Rosenberg summarized that there needed to be some assurance that folks are following BMP's. He said that the first priority would be to develop the BMP's and could revisit after they are developed whether these needed to become a certification.

Mr. Klein asked that Missy Henriksen get the word out to consumers that NPMA and the industry are working on BMP's.

Mr. Rosenberg spoke of crafting 4 workgroups within the committee. These consisted of:

1. Best Management Practices, Credentialing, Certification and Training
2. Public Policy
3. Public Outreach, Education, Messaging and Data Needs
4. Research and Efficacy

Next Mr. Rosenberg asked that the committee discuss how product efficacy should be addressed.

Mr. Arne would very much like to see product efficacy.

Dr. Kells said that Dini Miller and Mike Potter had very good data and that EPA needs to be more active on prosecuting false claims.

Ron Harrison felt that there needs to be a clearinghouse for products.

Dr. Kells said that exempt materials need efficacy data to be submitted to the states.

Mr. Cooper said that efficacy testing must be submitted for a product to be reviewed. He said that there were a lot of precuts where data is non-existent. He said that there needs to be a third party to look at protocols and data for products.

Julie Spagnoli said that for EPA it is a moving target. They are trying to set up standards for bed bug products. Manufacturers would love to have a standard for testing products.

Ms. Black had concerns that products on the internet could make unsubstantiated claims .

Mr. Rosenberg summarized that there was a group consensus that there needed to be a product efficacy standard. He also asked the group if the industry needed further research.

Mr. Sheperdigian said that there should be attention paid to how research is funded and that there was a possibility that information could be suppressed.

Dr. Kells said that it was very hard to get research money. Basic biology should be researched. NIH is working on policy that says bed bugs are a vector pest.

Mr. Rosenberg summarized that the industry does need additional research on bed bugs. He then asked that the group move on to industry messaging and outreach.

Mr. Steckel said that 99% of funding from government is for outreach.

Harold Harlan suggested that NPMA continue to push own needs to government. He said there should be an organized and comprehensive plan to encourage state and federal government agencies to expedite their actions on bed bugs. Faith Oi echoed these sentiments and noted there is not much money available for bed bug research from EPA.

Deni Naumann believed that the commercial division should blend with the third workgroup for the bed bug task force since they had already begun to work on this within their committee. She said that bed bugs are not going away and that we needed to set realistic expectations to the consumer.

Mr. Rosenberg said that the group would be tasked with organizing industry outreach and messaging. He reported that we need to identify better data from the industry and PMP's and that PPMA was working on a survey for consumer research. Information should also include global economic impact on society as well.

Mr. Steckel asked if there was money and time for R&D for new products and that PMP's should work to support vendors.

Mr. Stevenson said that information gathered should be provided to EPA.

Dr. Kells said that EPA has asked for extent of problem.

Mark Sheperdigian said that the state of bed bugs continues to grow and wondered if we could somehow monitor them. We should pay attention to new areas of need.

Mr. Rosenberg said that industry data should be a focus of this committee.

IV. Next Steps

Mr. Rosenberg said that he would send out notes the following week and that by email he would add an interest form to solicit participation on workgroups. There would be workgroup conference calls prior to Thanksgiving and that the committee would next meet at the NPMA Bed Bug Conference in January.