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Friday, October 2, 2009

# Heat-based technology escalates war on bed bugs

Pacific Business News (Honolulu) - by [Chad Blair](#) Pacific Business News

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Hawaii hotel operators and owners and managers of other commercial properties are turning to a newly approved technology in their war on bed bugs.

**ThermaPureHeat**, a heat-based technology, is an alternative to chemical pesticides. The **Hawaii Pest Control Board**, which has permitted its use on dry-wood termites for about the past seven years, expanded its use to include bed bugs on Aug 24.

Since then, interest in the product has benefitted Hawaii's only licensee, **Sandwich Isle Pest Solutions** of Pearl City, giving it a selling point unavailable to Mainland firms with Hawaii service such as Orkin Pest Control and Terminix International.

“It depends on the client, but we are seeing a dramatic shift toward heat,” said Michael Botha,

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founder of Sandwich Isle Pest Solutions. “Those who are not quite certain of the process, they go with the chemicals, because that’s what they are used to. But that’s an endless cycle.”

In this age of instant communication, operators of Hawaii hotels, resorts and other visitor accommodations are loathe to talk about bed bugs and other animal scourges.

But Botha, who started Sandwich Isle Pest Solutions in 1997 after serving as technical director for Terminix’s Hawaii region, said the rise in beg bug complaints has skyrocketed in recent years.

“When we started we had one or two bed bugs calls a year, hardly any at all, and most came from residential properties,” said Botha, whose client base is 50 percent visitor accommodations. “Today we get five to 10 calls per day. I’m dead serious.”

Bed bugs typically are brought into rooms by unsuspecting guests. About the size of an apple seed, the insects hide in crooks and crevices during the day and feed on human blood at night. Their bites are initially painless but turn into large welts. They are not known to spread disease.

While chemical pesticides can be effective in killing bed bugs and their eggs, they work best when applied directly. They also can require multiple treatments — the life cycle of eggs is 30 days — and some bed bugs have developed resistance.

By contrast, ThermaPureHeat is applied with a single treatment using either air heated to 150 degrees by propane heaters or convective air from electric heaters run off standard current. Fans are used to help the heat penetrate deep areas.

The dry, odorless heat not only kills the bugs and eggs but helps “pasteurize” rooms by killing other insects, allergens, mold, odors, bacteria and, ThermaPureHeat’s inventor believes, some viruses.

The process is also discreet — no striped tents are required — and takes only 24 hours. Heat-sensitive objects in rooms are covered with thermal blankets.

ThermaPureHeat is trademarked by the Ventura, Calif., company of the same name. CEO Dave Hedman, a veteran of the “indoor pollution arena,” as he puts it, bought the patents on the technology for environmental application in 2001 after hearing of its use by UCLA

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scientists.

Hedman told PBN that ThermaPureHeat has been “deluged” by companies seeking licensing and training.

Its popularity also has led to copycat competitors, and Hedman’s attorneys have been battling patent infringement.

Sandwich Isle Pest Solutions, which has nearly 50 company vehicles making service calls every day in the state, turned to ThermaPureHeat after learning that chemical treatments had a 20 percent failure rate in killing bed bugs. The proof came through the help of beagles, which have a 97 percent accuracy in sniffing out the pests.

To satisfy the Pest Control Board, Sandwich Isle Pest Solutions tested the product for free on various projects. With state approval now in hand, Botha expects his business to grow.

“One in 300 hotel rooms in Waikiki has bed bugs, even if there are no complaints,” he said.

*cblair@bizjournals.com / 955-8036*

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