



CASE STUDY

CONQUERING THE SLOPES OF PEST CONTROL: KEEPING SKI RESORTS BUG-FREE

Delivering effective pest control at ski resorts is like mastering the slopes. You need to have efficiency of movement and be able to leverage options to achieve the desired outcome – no pests.

Sprague Pest Solutions has been climbing to new heights partnering with world-class ski resort properties to protect their food and beverage operations, retail facilities, and guest accommodations from pests that are not deterred by the elevation or cold temperatures.

CHALLENGES

The challenges in providing pest control services to ski resorts stem from a variety of issues including the seasonality of the industry, accessibility, size of the property and the natural setting where ski areas are located.

- **Seasonality:** Some ski properties are open year-around, others close tight in spring and don't reopen until the snow returns in late fall or early winter. This requires adjusting our approach to pest control program design. If the property fully closes it provides pests undisturbed access to buildings for several months.
- **Accessibility:** The location of ski resort properties makes accessibility a challenge, especially during inclement weather. Sprague Route Managers have taken gondolas, snowcats and snow mobiles to reach facilities and provide services, and carried their tools of the trade (i.e., traps, baits, etc.) in backpacks to deliver services.
- **Rural Settings:** Pests' natural habitat, especially rodents, is often the great outdoors. The rural, natural setting of ski properties makes their facilities, especially those containing food and beverage outlets, prime targets for pests looking for sources of food, water and shelter.
- **Seasonal Turnover:** As with many service industry businesses, seasonal ski employee turnover is high and that can translate to inconsistent approaches to daily duties that can prevent pests. If, for example, sanitation, cleaning and trash removal practices or basic actions like keeping doors and windows closed are not followed, pest conducive conditions will increase.
- **Property Size:** Ski properties can consist of three or four buildings or dozens of structures including hotels and condominiums, employee dormitories, numerous food, beverage and retail outlets, and support buildings. Most ski resorts also have a diverse mix of old and new construction that can make keeping pests, especially rodents, from gaining access.
- **High Volume of People Traffic:** Ski resorts are like airports the day before Thanksgiving – crowded during peak season. The constant coming and going of people and deliveries of food and other supplies make ski properties vulnerable to the introduction of a wide variety of hitchhiking pests including bed bugs, cockroaches and rodents.
- **Pests Are a Year-Round Threat:** Many clients are surprised to find that pests can be a year-round threat, even with freezing temperatures and multiple feet of snow. Overwintering pests that gain access to a facility, especially those with food service outlets, can easily sustain themselves in wall voids, under kitchen equipment and the dark corners of storage rooms, all winter long.

“

The mountain closes and there is a constant flow of visitors and deliveries which promotes conditions that can be conducive to pests.

”

Felix Garcia

Route Manager
Sprague Pest Solutions

SOLUTIONS

To maximize the efficiency of their service visits – which can take up to a full day to complete when you include drive time - Sprague's Route Managers stack the effects with the design and delivery of their pest programs.

Sprague Route Manager Felix Garcia provides weekly year-round service to a ski property with multiple lodging facilities and food service outlets, including several commercial kitchens, retail space, a convention center and employee dormitories. His account contact provides him with a different work list each week that can include up to 10 buildings.

"The mountain never closes and there is a constant flow of visitors and deliveries which promotes conditions that can be conducive to pests," said Garcia.

Each of the property's buildings provide a different environment for pests. The building's purpose (i.e., lodging, food service, retail, storage, etc.) combined with a mix of new and old construction, different levels of sanitation, etc. makes designing pest programs different in each location.

Garcia said there was an issue with German cockroaches in a basement storeroom below the resort's primary commercial kitchen. The kitchen not only prepared food for the resort's numerous food outlets but also for the conference center. The building was one of the resort's older structures and its construction has multiple cracks, crevices and other locations for the cockroaches to hide.

The cockroaches were introduced in incoming shipments to the kitchen commissary. After an extensive inspection and multiple service visits, the source of the infestation was located behind stacked boxes in the rear of a storeroom. The boxes, which hadn't been moved in some time, held syrup that had leaked thus providing the cockroaches with an attractive feast. The area was cleaned out and the cockroach pressure dropped dramatically.

"The client was surprised to learn cockroaches can survive at this altitude and the cold temperatures but when there is ready access to food and a warm place inside a building, they can thrive," said Garcia.

Route Manager Nick Choukalas said food service and preparation areas are the focus when servicing ski properties.

"Clients are concerned with food safety and the threat pests pose to kitchens, restaurants and quick food service outlets," said Choukalas, whose accounts include both seasonal and year around facilities.

Rodents, especially deer mice, are the primary year-round threat facing ski properties. Summer brings on more intense pest pressure with flies, stinging insects, ants and nuisance wildlife being added to the service mix. And while deer mice are a native mouse, we don't want them to make their home inside facilities when their place is outside.

Choukalas and Garcia said exclusion and client education are the primary tools they deploy to prevent and control pests at their ski properties.



Clients are concerned with food safety and the threat that pests pose to kitchen, restaurants and quick food service outlets.



Nick Choukalas

Route Manager
Sprague Pest Solutions



Exclusion and trapping are essential to reducing the rodent threat, especially when you don't have access to the property.



Jared Lowrey

Route Manager
Sprague Pest Solutions

- **Exclusion:** On older buildings exclusion work can be a challenge due to construction methods, aging materials and frequency of maintenance and repairs. The natural setting usually has trees and vegetation near structures providing pests harborage and access to roofs.
- **Keeping Doors Closed:** The simplest of tasks can also be the most impactful for a control program. Rodents, flies, stinging insects and a variety of wildlife including racoons, skunks, pine martens and others will readily access structures when employees leave doors and windows open during the warmer summer months.
- **Dumpsters and Garbage Rooms:** During the summer months dumpsters that do not have lids are magnets for rodents, flies, and wildlife. In the winter, garbage rooms where trash is stored until it can be picked up are attractive to pests that have established winter residence inside ski resort properties.

When buildings are closed for the season Sprague Route Managers rely on exclusion and intensive trapping programs to keep rodent populations in check.

Route Manager Jared Lowrey services a ski property that shuts down completely during the summer months. With no access to the structures, Lowrey must install a comprehensive interior trapping program to keep the active deer mice population in check.

“Exclusion and trapping are essential to reducing the rodent threat, especially when you don’t have access to the property,” said Lowrey.

RESULTS

The elevated approach Sprague Pest Solutions takes to servicing ski resorts starts with a customized program that reflects the specific needs and unique environments of these properties. Sprague measures the success of its pest control programs when it delivers:

- **Fewer Pests:** A measurable decrease in the number of pest sightings and incidents reported by guests, staff and through pest monitoring programs.
- **Emphasis on Pest Prevention:** Establish a culture of pest prevention to reduce the risk of future infestations. This includes proper sanitation and cleaning, exclusion, regular inspections and service calls, and staff education.
- **Brand Protection:** A viral video of a rodent in a chalet or bed bugs in a lodge guest room on social media or a negative review on a travel website can have serious brand and financial implications; something ski resorts owners and management want to avoid.
- **Responsiveness:** A fast and effective response to any pest issues, even with challenges of accessibility, to minimize the impact on guests and operations is necessary.
- **Client Satisfaction:** High levels of client satisfaction in reducing pest pressure and continually reducing pest conducive conditions.



The client was surprised to learn cockroaches can survive at this altitude and the cold temperatures but when there is ready access to food and a warm place inside a building, they can thrive.



Felix Garcia

Route Manager
Sprague Pest Solutions