Pest signs in a restaurant: what staff should report

Pest awareness is most useful when staff can describe a sign and protect the affected area promptly. Show the reporting contact and the business procedure for suspect stock, waste areas and access points. Staff should look for signs during ordinary receiving, cleaning and closing duties. A specific location and time are more useful than a general message that something looked wrong.

UK staff recognition and prevention introduction; pesticide application and specialist treatment are outside scope.

The practical principles

Look for evidence

Possible signs include droppings, gnawed packaging, insect activity, nesting material and unusual damage near stores. Check the areas assigned in the opening or closing routine. A sighting near food requires prompt attention even when service is busy. Record the exact location and observations so the responsible person or contractor can investigate effectively.

Reduce opportunities

Store food securely, clear spillages and keep waste under control. Report gaps around doors, damaged screens and leaks. Follow the delivery-check routine so infested packaging is identified before it reaches storage. Keep access to inspection points clear. Staff should leave bait stations and control equipment in their authorised positions and report damage rather than moving them casually.

Respond through the plan

Tell the supervisor promptly and protect potentially affected food from use. Follow instructions for segregating stock and cleaning contaminated areas. Specialist treatment belongs with the authorised pest-control arrangement, including suitable controls for food areas. Record what was removed, cleaned or withheld and who approved the area’s return to use. Follow-up matters because a single clean-up may leave the access point unresolved.

Work through a shift scenario

Fictional exercise: a delivery assistant notices damaged packaging and possible droppings behind a dry-store shelf. They stop the affected stock entering normal use, notify the manager and follow the procedure for isolating the area and recording the observation. The manager arranges the appropriate investigation and treatment. The assistant should not brush the evidence away and return the stock to the shelf.

Avoid the common failure

An isolated sighting can be dismissed when the information never reaches the person responsible. Record recurring observations together and review entry points, waste handling and housekeeping. Avoid self-applying pesticides or traps without authorisation and suitable competence. Discard food suspected of pest contact. Keep neighbouring stock out of use until checked, and follow the responsible person’s instructions before reopening the area.

A second situation to discuss

Fictional scenario: You find gnawed flour packaging and droppings in a dry store before breakfast service.

Prevent affected stock being used, inform the supervisor and record the location. Follow the contamination and pest-response procedure. Ask for adjacent stock and entry points to be checked and leave treatment to the authorised arrangement.

Use a working record

Record the specific arrangements below before the briefing. Keep the wording short enough for a colleague to use during the shift. Where a field does not apply, explain why; where information is missing, assign a person to resolve it. Store personal or sensitive details in the business's approved system.

- Exact place
- sign observed
- stock affected
- immediate protection
- manager notified
- follow-up reference

At the next handover, ask what changed, which action remains open and who now owns it. Close the record only when the agreed follow-up is complete. A recurring problem should inform the next briefing and the relevant operational procedure.

Check understanding

Gnawed packaging should be:

Keep affected stock out of use and report it. Discard any food you think pests have touched.

A prevention measure is:

Prompt spill control and secure storage Reducing food access helps prevention.

Pest awareness: damaged packaging in a dry store

A storekeeper finds gnawed packaging behind an unopened delivery. The team needs the adjacent stock for lunch. What should be preserved for the person assessing the problem?

Compare your decision

Discard any food you think pests have touched. Keep neighbouring stock out of use while the manager checks it, and call the pest contractor immediately if there are signs of infestation. Report the exact shelf, packaging and nearby evidence.

Sketch the location and identify which stock moved before the discovery. Cleaning away all evidence before reporting can make the extent harder to establish.

Sources and scope

- Food Standards Agency: pest control safe method
- Source: https://myhaccp.food.gov.uk/help/guidance/general-requirements-be-considered-each-prerequisite

Original workplace examples and suggested record. Prepared 19 October 2026. Use the current linked guidance and the venue's procedures for operational decisions.

Use this on shift

Resource page and fillable working record · Read the online guide · Course details