PROFESSIONAL

Pest Manager

June/July 2005

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INCORPORATING PESTALK

Australia's first 'Pest Manager of the Year'

Shane Clarke

Lance Cain

Inside:

2005 AEPMA National Conference wrap

PestCert: Why bother?

Bities and scratchies under the microscope

Infrared technology

Tracee Trammell

PrintPost Approved PP224987/00096

P R O F E S S I O N A L

Pest Manager

June/July 2005 Vol. 9 No. 4

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MILNE PUBLICATIONS

Managing Director: **Rex Holyoake**

PROFESSIONAL PEST MANAGER is a CAB Audited magazine published six times a year by Richard Milne Pty Ltd (ACN 001 322 836) (A.B.N. 88 001 322 836)

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SUBSCRIPTIONS: AUSTRALIA One year – $37.40*. (*Subscription rate is GST inclusive)
OTHER COUNTRIES One year – Airmail: New Zealand, Asia Pacific including the Sub-continent – $A53; Rest of the World– $A59.
Credit card payments accepted: Mastercard, Visa and Bankcard.
Cheque payments to be in Australian dollars and send full details to: Richard Milne Pty Ltd, PO Box 163, Drummoyne, NSW 1470 Australia.

CHANGE OF ADDRESS: Send your new details and current subscription number, along with the old address label, if possible, to above address.

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Australia's first 'Pest Manager of the Year'

Winners are grinners: Elaine and Peter Arnold

For Peter Arnold pest management came … well … naturally.

In 1991, soon after arriving in Perth from the UK, as a qualified gas fitter but without a job, he was introduced to one of Australian nature's most socially sophisticated insects, termites. Immediately he became 'besotted'.

"There was no holding me back. I was totally intrigued by these little critters that were about to change my life completely," Peter said.

Over the past 14 years, first in WA and, since April 2001, on Queensland's Sunshine Coast, Peter has become a recognised expert in termite management.

Peter and Elaine Arnold's company, Termite Doctors, which employs a team of seven technicians, operates out of Buderim with a simple objective: "to identify, manage and protect homes from termites".

On the afternoon of Saturday, June 4, Peter was named Australia's inaugural Pest Manager of the Year. The award was sponsored by Sorex, Globe Australia, PestCert and AEPMA.

It is not the first award for the Arnolds. In October 2004 Peter and Elaine also won the Sunshine Coast's Excellence in Business Awards 2004 in Service category.

One of the keys to Peter's success is his unbridled passion for his work, profession and nature.

"When you feel passionately, striving for further knowledge becomes second nature and can be very fulfilling," he said.

"When you're committed to learn, your mind readily absorbs new concepts and you find yourself taking every opportunity to discuss the subject with colleagues and others in the industry."

Peter and Elaine also work closely with suppliers and have collaborated with other pest managers helping Dow AgroSciences develop strategies to induce termites to feed more avidly on Sentricon baits.

"We all shared in the wealth of know-how that resulted from our efforts … proving we could be competitors in business yet be partners in knowledge," Peter said.

"Knowledge should be shared and I get great enjoyment assisting fellow pesties with advice and training our own team members to reach higher technical competencies.

"It's that level of expertise that gives customers confidence in our industry and that their most valuable asset is in the hands of technicians who are well trained and passionate about their work."

A long time active member of AEPMA, Peter is currently vice chairman of the Association's newly formed Sunshine Coast Sub Branch.

"I am a strong believer that, collectively, we can improve our industry and help guide legislation that will provide better consumer protection and improve the standard of pest control in Australia," he said.

Peter was also part of the SE Queensland PestCert Pilot program and sees PestCert as helping achieve higher standards.

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From the left: Geoff Hawes, AEPMA President; Elaine and Peter Arnold, Australian Pest Manager of the Year; Ron DeGroot, PestCert; Gill Christiansen, finalist; Jason Green, Globe Australia; Maree Christiansen and Peter May, representing Sorex.

The Termite Doctors are in

Image and substance

As well as delivering substance and quality, Termite Doctors is very conscious of its image.

"I realised from my very early days in business that reputations are won or lost on the initial perceptions of our customers," Peter said.

Termite Doctors has set key performance standards for all its team members.

"From a customer's first phone contact to our careful postoperative clean-up procedures, we always strive to present a reliable and professional pest management image," he said.

"Our vehicles are always clean, clearly sign written, and tidy inside.

"Our team members, always polite and courteous, wear clean uniforms with shirts tucked in and come to work clean-shaven. They are always on time or phone ahead in plenty of time as soon as they are aware of any delays at a previous job.

"They always greet the customer by their name, smile genuinely, and show respect for the customer's property and at all times show the customer that they really care.

"BSA and PCO licenses, insurance certificates and AEPMA membership is always shown to our customers and these details are included in any advertising.

"And Termite Doctors embraces and always conducts its business in accordance with AEPMA's Code of Ethics.

"Feedback shows this approach gives our customers greater confidence that they are getting a professional job with a guaranteed outcome.

"We've been pleasantly surprised that other pest managers are following our lead and we feel that the industry will benefit from a consistently high degree of presentation," he said.

Customer Relationships

Peter said building relationships is important to business growth and in maintaining a competitive advantage.

In 2004, he and Elaine established Client Advisory Boards involving around ten clients who, with the aid of an independent facilitator, meet regularly to provide feedback on Termite Doctors' service.

"While these groups often provide ideas for new services and they are also another way for us to demonstrate our commitment to continual improvement," Peter said.

"For all our customers we want to make pest management as stress free and pleasant as possible. For instance, after each termite protection job, we leave a small thank you gift with each customer and then follow up after two days with a phone call to check their satisfaction with our service and inquire if there are any changes or improvements we could make for the future.

"Our customers love the concept and we find that it's another great way to monitor and measure our performance." ▷

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For Peter and Elaine, special customers deserve and get special attention, as shown by the way they do termite inspections for elderly people.

"After assessing the situation and giving our written proposal, we are often asked to do the work immediately," he said.

"However, because we know that fear usually displaces rational thought in these circumstances, we frequently decline to take the order on the spot and, instead, encourage these customers to involve a family member whose advice they trust to review the prognosis and discuss the alternatives.

"After a day or two we make contact again and follow through with the customers' instructions. This can mean that we lose jobs but our customer focus is built on honesty without high-pressure sales techniques.

Innovation

"Innovation is a fundamental facet of Termite Doctor's success and forms part of our operating focus," according to Peter Arnold.

And, for Peter, innovation encompasses all facets of his business, from product and service development to occupational health and safety.

"Safety is of paramount importance to me and to ensure compliance with our standards all new team members must undertake the Termite Doctors safety induction," Peter said.

"This is a half-day course covering the use and implementation of all personal safety equipment, spills kit, fire extinguisher, first aid kit and introduces our team members to vital issues on contamination.

"To minimise cross contamination we have developed a system of red and blue towels.

"Bright red towels – red for danger – are for mopping any general pesticide or chemical spills. Red towels are not to be used for anything other than spills. Contaminated towels are placed directly into a clear sealable container and cannot be removed again until they are taken out for washing.

"Blue towels are for personal use only and team members stow these towels in a large clear sealable container that also holds their personal safety kit, which includes Aeroguard and sunscreen."

Before they start with Termite Doctors, all staff undergo an extensive induction process focussed around what Peter calls his Unique Operating System (UOS) which clearly sets out "the way we do things at Termite Doctors".

"Our UOS comprises a series of easy to read flow charts on all administrative and operational procedures. It explains our step-by-step guide on all aspects of our business, from answering phones, through our pre-site arrival procedure, how we introduce ourselves, and how to listen, observe and guide customers through prospective treatments and processes," he said.

As part of Termite Doctors UOS, every technician completes a risk analysis checklist when they arrive on a job for the first time. The checklist is maintained on file and referred to before each subsequent visit.

"This checklist addresses issues of personal health and safety, client and general public health and safety and local micro and macro environmental concerns," Peter said.

All team members are also trained in integrated pest management techniques and encouraged to not rely solely on chemicals.

"At Termite Doctors we consider the physical and cultural changes that may be necessary to effect a comprehensive solution to pest management. At times, this will entail customer education on hygiene and operational practices," he said.

"To inject a bit of humour into the issue we present our customers with Termite Doctors branded fly swots – always a great ice breaker that also shows

Ooops!

Chris Elder

Peter Arnold

Seems even the best of us … and the worst … can make mistakes.

In the April May issue of *Professional Pest Manager*, in the article about entrants in the 2004 Pest Manager of the Year award, we mixed up the photographs of Chris Elder and the ultimate winner, Peter Arnold.

To both these guys, we apologise.

Peter Arnold:
"Well, this is what it's like to be a winner."

chemicals are not always the solution to a pest problem!"

As part of its approach to risk management and analysis team members are required to always determine the safest means and lowest toxicity possible to achieve a positive outcome.

"We are particularly diligent on potential contamination of watercourses from run-off and the contamination of gutter, water catchment and tank systems used in home construction," Peter said.

In his pre-presentation speech at the AEPMA Conference, before he knew he'd won, Peter Arnold said he was, "very honoured to have reached the finals … especially knowing the quality and calibre of the other finalists".

"I hope that this independent Pest Manager of the Year award can help bond together our industry and help to improve our communications and support of each other," he said.

"I feel that the categories chosen for us in the selection criteria were excellent and the whole process – from initial written submission through to presentation in front of a judging panel – fully stretched me and this gave me an excellent view of our business, our special team and myself.

"It also helped me to refine my goals and understand the balance in life between: work, family and self.

"I would strongly urge all Pest Managers to have a go at next year's competition.

"Since going in for this award I have been asked several times, 'What do you think makes a good pest manager?'

"Great pest managers have passion for their work.

"They must love the daily challenges and genuinely want to help people.

"They must always strive for excellence in customer service. and have the highest integrity, combined with a strong desire for continued learning," he said.

Peter went on to congratulate Gill Christensen for also making the final.

"And I would also like to thank Sorex, AEPMA, and PestCert for this award, and all the other competitors for the friendliness, warmth and mutual respect that they have shown throughout." ■

Charities gain from BES shirt selling

BES business manager, David Priddy, WA pest manager, Brian Langenberg and Geoff Hawes.

More than a dozen charities have shared in windfall donations totalling close to $8,000 thanks to some smart thinking and generosity on the part of Bayer Environmental Science (BES) and T-shirt envy and big heartedness on the part of pest managers and other AEPMA conference delegates.

Right from the opening of the conference BES team members came under pressure to part with their 'pop art' promotional T-shirts. Everyone, it seemed, saw the surreal designs as 'must haves'.

The pressure and pestering had became so intense that BES termiticide product manager, David Priddie and the rest of the team on the Bayer stand began to wonder if they were going to get out of the venue with their shirts still on their backs. And then, the penny … make that dollars … dropped.

"What if we could get hold of some more of the shirts and sell them?" they wondered. "Better still, what if we could raise some worthwhile money from them for charity?"

A few quick phone calls, including back to their office to get official company backing, and the die was cast. On the afternoon of the final day of the conference, BES would conduct an auction of 20 specially printed up shirts, with all money going to charities nominated by successful bidders and matched, dollar for dollar, by Bayer.

Auctioneer (and new AEPMA president) Geoff Hawes said he was astounded both with the demand and generosity of the delegates.

"Before the auction, I knew I'd be able to rustle up a few bids. But the levels to which people went to get hold of these shirts blew me away," Geoff said.

The 20 shirts donated by Bayer ended up fetching an astounding average of just over $170 each (some went for over $300) which meant Bayer also kicked in an additional $3,500.

Well done, and thank you, BES! And well done delegates!

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2005 Risk Management Conference

The 2005 RAPID Solutions Risk Management Conference will be held from 9 to 10 September at Conrad Jupiter's Casino on Queensland's Gold Coast.

According to RAPID's Managing Director, Graham Hellier, last year's inaugural Risk Management Conference attracted 439 delegates from around the country.

"This year's attendance is expected to expected to exceed 500 of our clients and, considering the number of registrations that have already been received, maybe 550 delegates could be closer to the mark, making it the biggest pest management event in Australia" Mr Hellier said.

This year's conference, open to RAPID Solutions' clients, will feature a list of new speakers, each with many years of industry experience and expertise.

As was the case last year, the conference will comprise a combination of general and concurrent presentation sessions.

"The general sessions will apply to all our clients while the concurrent presentations – on agricultural pest and weed management; building inspections; termite management; and urban pest management – will provide delegates with the option of attending sessions most relevant to their work," he said.

General sessions will include coverage of claims management and court procedures; business management and growth; OH&S 'obligations'; understanding insurance requirements; and human resources as a key to managing business.

Agricultural pest and weed sessions will look at: best practice pesticide management; preventing weed spread; broad acre weed management; and aquatic weed control.

Sessions on building inspections are expected to cover: computer generated reports; critical elements of building inspections; standard building inspections; and special purpose property inspections.

Bird management; carpet beetle identification and management; servicing commercial premises; and stored product pests will be covered under the umbrella of Urban pest management, while the termite management sessions will include: latest termite management technology; termite paperwork; computer generated reports; and termite baiting.

Graham Hellier addresses last years RAPID conference.

Mr Hellier said this year's Keynote speaker will be the highly respected Commissioner of the NSW Rural Fire Service, Phillip Koperberg.

Commissioner Koperberg will speak about how he transformed the Rural Fire Service, from an outfit with little government support and money to what it is today, a major successful community service saving the lives of hundreds of families a year.

"The conference will also be supported by a major industry tradeshow featuring exhibitors which appeared last year plus a host of exciting new ones," he said.

"Importantly, by attending and completing all the required evaluation forms, pest managers can obtain up to 60 CPD points for PestCert accreditation and RAPID Solutions insurance discounts.

"On top of that, pest managers who attend will also gain a wealth of knowledge on how to grow their businesses and better manage their risks," Mr Hellier said.

New public health manager at Syngenta

Syngenta has announced the appointment of Russell Schulman to the position of market manager – Public Health.

Russell Schulman

Mr Schulman commenced his career in pharmaceuticals, working in a market analysis role. He then moved on to a more consumer-oriented role, where he launched a range of products into pharmacy.

In his three years with Syngenta, Russell Schulman has worked in numerous marketing roles. He said he looks forward to enhancing Syngenta's current portfolio and working on new market opportunities to assist the pest management industry and to supporting Syngenta's commitment to the public health business.

Raja moves on

After 16 years – 13 in Australia and almost three in France – well known and much loved industry stalwart, Raja Mahendran, has left Bayer Environmental Science to join Novartis Animal Health. He is now global category manager - disease vector control at the Novartis AH global headquarters in Basel, Switzerland.

In an email to PPM, Raja said, "I would like to express my thanks and gratitude to the PCO industry in Australia for the support over the years.

"My last 16 years have been the best years of my life and most of it was spent working with the PCOs in Australia, launching great products and running creative and innovative promotions. They were all very successful thanks to the support extended to me and Bayer by the PCOs," he said.

Raja now has global responsibilities for rodenticides and disinfectants. He also has the responsibility for the fly franchise for North America.

PPM will be getting back in touch with Raja to find out more of his new life in Switzerland.

In the meantime, for those who would like to get in first, or just catch up, email: Raja.Mahendran@novartis.com