

TICK CHECK: The 2020 State of the **TICK CONTROL MARKET**

A mild winter and yard-bound customers have some PMPs gearing up for a blockbuster tick season.

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TICK REVENUE: **Significant for Many PMPs**

According to PCT's first-ever State of the Tick Control Market survey, 76 percent of pest management companies offer tick control services.

But companies operating in the Northeast, Midwest and Mid-Atlantic regions are more likely to see demand for the service — and higher revenues as a result — because Lyme disease-carrying ticks are concentrated there.

At Connecticut Tick Control in Norwalk, founded in 1999, “that’s all we do,” said President David Whitman. “We started out with one truck in one state; we have over 30 trucks now and we’re in five states,” he said of entities operated by him and brother Richard Whitman.

Mark Constantino, owner of Arkadia — Eco Pest Control in Randolph, N.J., said, “Tick control has quickly become our largest revenue stream within the past three years.” Last year the service increased 42 percent generating \$293,000, or about 35 percent of the company’s total revenue, he said.

Ticks signal the end of the slow winter season for A-Action Pest Control in Antioch, Ill. “Ticks definitely contribute to an influx of phone calls in the early spring,” said Adam Ring, vice president of field operations. The company’s yard pest program, which includes tick control, grew 45 percent to nearly \$150,000 in revenue in 2019. “We’re looking to grow again for 2020,”

he said.

For most companies, however, tick control generated less than \$5,000 in revenue last year, reported 62 percent of pest management professionals in the survey. Thirty nine percent said its significance to the business did not change over the past five years, while 38 percent said tick control became more important.


Among PMPs who don’t offer tick control, 32 percent said the niche service was not worth their time and effort; 20 percent said ticks were not a problem in their markets.

Competition from tick-focused franchises kept Phoenix Pest and Wildlife Control in Danville, Ind., from ex-

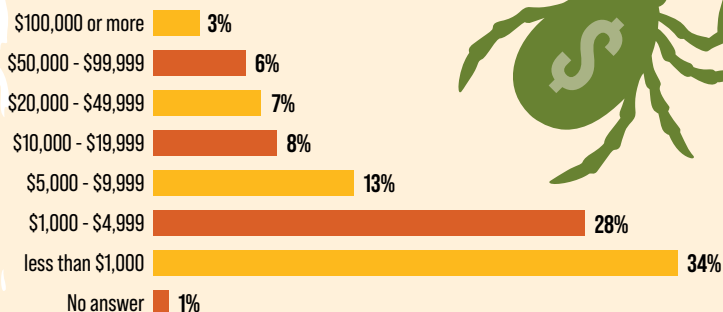
76%
companies offering
tick control services

Source: Readex Research; Respondents: 187

panding this business segment, which accounts for about 5 percent of total revenue. “Once they get a majority of the neighborhood it’s hard to make it worth your time,” explained Cassi Magnus, a co-owner of the company. Still, there’s value in offering the service. “We like to be a one-stop shop for people,” said Magnus.

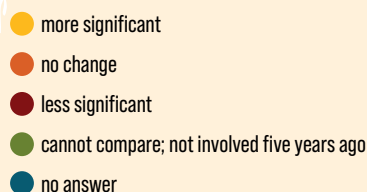
Keller’s Pest Control in Bradenton, Fla., offers tick control even though revenue “is fairly insignificant,” said President Rodney O’Quinn. “One of the things about ticks is that when people see them, they panic,” he said. By providing the service he can allay customer fears and also capture “whatever little business there is.” 

REVENUE FROM TICK CONTROL SERVICES IN 2019



Source: Readex Research; Respondents: 143

CHANGE IN SIGNIFICANCE OF TICK CONTROL SERVICES TO BUSINESS OVER PAST FIVE YEARS



Source: Readex Research; Respondents: 143

REASONS FOR NOT OFFERING TICK CONTROL SERVICES



Source: Readex Research; Respondents: 44; Respondents could select multiple answers

THE PEST:

Infestations Are Up For Some

Nearly half (49 percent) of PMPs said the frequency of tick infestations increased in the past year, according to the PCT 2020 State of the Tick Control Market survey.


“We’re certainly seeing an increase in tick issues in our state, especially in more rural areas,” said Mark Constantino, Arkadia — Eco Pest Control. “The more homes that they build next to forests with a dense deer population the higher the risk of coming into contact with a deer tick that carries Lyme disease,” he said.

Others reported few tick issues. “I have never had to treat for ticks in my area in my 13-plus years in the industry,” said Ryan Ewalt, owner of Victory Pest Control, Myrtle Beach, S.C. “There just aren’t very many cases of ticks around here,” he says.

Rodney O’Quinn, Keller’s Pest Control, believes the pet

medicines prescribed by veterinarians have significantly impacted tick populations. “That I believe is probably the biggest factor as to why our tick business and flea business has basically become extinct,” he said.

The PCT survey found the largest number of tick service calls in 2019 were due to brown dog ticks (28 percent), American dog ticks (27 percent), blacklegged ticks (18 percent) and lone star ticks (10 percent). While more than a quarter (27 percent) of PMPs said no particular species posed a control challenge, almost a quarter (24 percent) said the brown dog tick is the most difficult to manage.

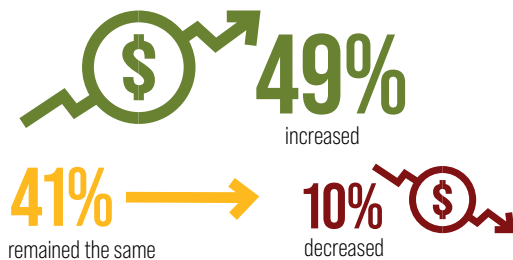
The pests are vectors of numerous diseases. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reports their bite can transmit bacteria that cause Lyme disease, tularemia, Rocky Mountain spotted fever, ehrlichiosis, babesiosis, Powassan virus disease, Heartland virus and anaplasmosis, among other illnesses. 

41%

percentage of PMPs who say
customers are concerned
about public health risks
associated with ticks

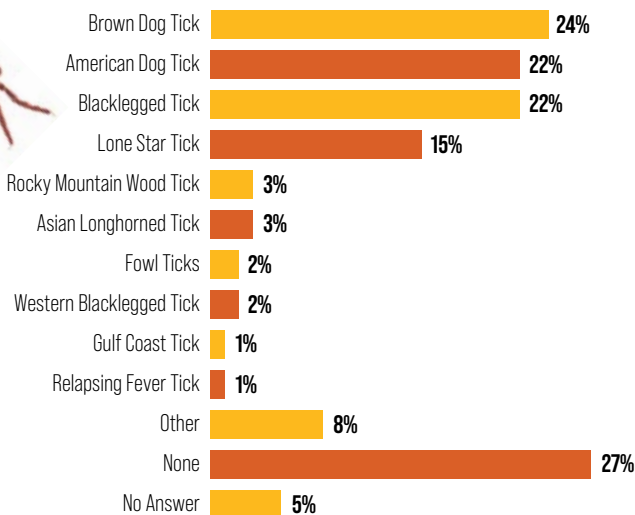
Source: Readex Research;
Respondents: 187

CHANGE IN INCIDENCE OF TICK INFESTATIONS OVER THE PAST YEAR



Source: Readex Research; Respondents: 143

MOST DIFFICULT TICK SPECIES TO CONTROL?



Source: Readex Research; Respondents: 143; Respondents could select multiple answers

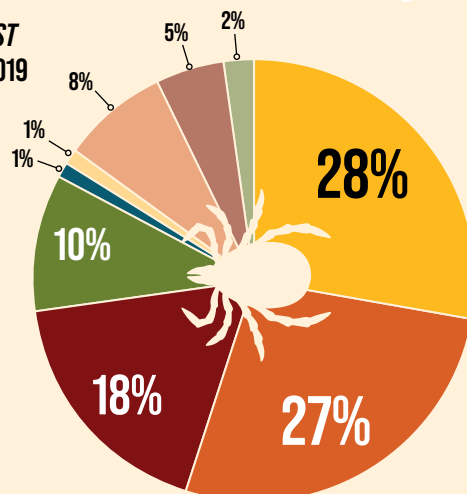
HAS THE PEST MANAGEMENT INDUSTRY DONE AN EFFECTIVE JOB OF COMMUNICATING THE PUBLIC HEALTH RISKS ASSOCIATED WITH TICKS?



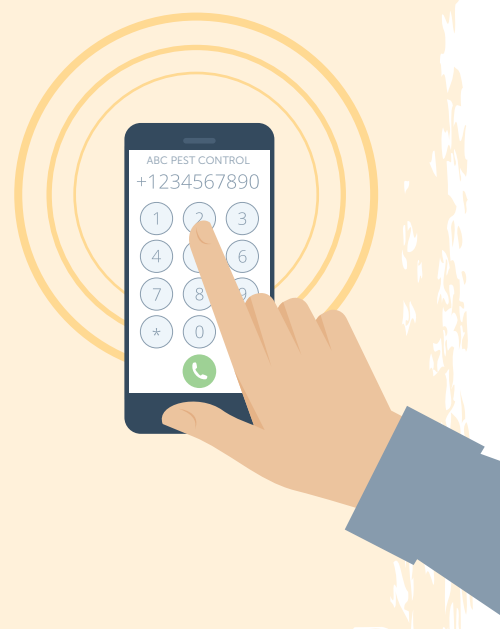
Source: Readex Research; Respondents: 187

TICK SPECIES REPRESENTING LARGEST PERCENTAGE OF SERVICE CALLS IN 2019

- Brown Dog Tick
- American Dog Tick
- Blacklegged Tick
- Lone Star Tick
- Rocky Mountain Wood Tick
- Western Blacklegged Tick
- Other
- None
- No Answer



Source: Readex Research; Respondents: 143



IT'S TICK TIME



A PMP'S GUIDE TO COMBATING TICKS



No homeowner wants to see ticks around their property. These arachnids thrive in tall grasses, wooded areas, and under piles of chopped wood or leaves. Ticks don't just seek shelter around your clients' properties, they are also vectors of disease. With disease cases from ticks almost doubling in the U.S. between 2004 and 2016*, tick prevention and treatment has never been more important. This tick guide will equip you with everything you need to know about these disease-spreading arachnids and most importantly, how to control them.

*Resource: Resource: The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

TICK SPECIES



American Dog Tick (aka Wood Tick)

- 📍 Widely distributed east of the Rocky Mountains.
- 📄 Adult females are most likely to feed on humans.



Brown Dog Tick

- 📍 Southwestern U.S. and along the U.S./Mexico Border.
- ✅ The only tick that can complete its entire life cycle indoors or out.



Lone Star Tick

- 📍 Widely distributed in the Southeastern and Eastern U.S.
- ✅ The adult female is distinguished by a white dot or "lone star" on her back.



Gulf Coast Tick

- 📍 Southeastern coast of the U.S. and the Gulf of Mexico.
- ✅ Larvae and nymphs may feed on birds and small rodents, while adult ticks feed on deer and other wildlife.



Western Blacklegged Tick

- 📍 Pacific coast of the U.S., particularly Northern California.
- ✅ Although all life stages bite humans, adult females are more often reported on humans.



Rocky Mountain Wood Tick

- 📍 Rocky Mountain states in the U.S. and Southwestern Canada.
- ✅ Adult ticks are primarily associated with pathogen transmission to humans.



Blacklegged Tick (aka Deer Tick)

- 📍 Widely distributed across the U.S.
- ✅ Adults may be out searching for hosts in the winter any time the temperature is above freezing.



BEHAVIOR

- Ticks feed on the blood of their hosts and become active at about 45°F.
- Soft ticks live in the nests of their hosts while hard ticks live in the environment, except when feeding.
- Ticks have prolonged feeding behaviors that make them excellent vectors of disease.
- Ticks "quest" by clinging to vegetation in a position to latch onto passing animals.
- Hard ticks excrete a milk white substance that hardens like latex and helps them maintain their hold on hosts.

DISEASES*

Below is a list of diseases, the ticks that transmit them and when applicable, the regions they can be found. To learn more about tracking tips and the spread of these diseases, visit www.CDC.gov/ticks.

Anaplasmosis: transmitted by the blacklegged tick along the Pacific coast, the Northeast, and the Midwest.

Babesiosis: transmitted by the blacklegged tick in the Northeast and Midwest.

Borrelia Mayonii: transmitted by the blacklegged tick in Minnesota and Wisconsin.

Colorado tick fever: transmitted by the Rocky Mountain wood tick in the Rocky Mountain states at elevations of 4,000 to 10,500 feet.

Ehrlichiosis: transmitted by the lone star tick.

Heartland virus: transmitted by the lone star tick in the Midwestern and Southern United States.

Lyme disease: transmitted by the blacklegged tick in the Northeastern U.S. and Upper Midwestern U.S., as well as along the Pacific coast.

Powassan disease: transmitted by the blacklegged tick in the Northeastern states and the Great Lakes region.

Rickettsia parkeri rickettsiosis: transmitted by the Gulf Coast tick.

Rocky Mountain spotted fever (RMSF): transmitted by the American dog tick, Rocky Mountain wood tick and the brown dog tick.

STARI (Southern Tick-Associated Rash Illness): transmitted by the lone star tick.

Tularemia: transmitted by the American dog tick, the Rocky Mountain wood tick, and the lone star tick throughout the U.S.

*Resource: The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention "<https://www.cdc.gov/ticks/diseases/index.html>"

HABITATS

- Border areas of lawns.
- Wooded areas.
- Tall brush/grass.
- Under leaves, under ground cover (plants) in yard, and in leaf litter.
- Around stone walls and woodpiles where mice and other small mammals live.
- Ticks are generally found around bodies of water where wildlife gather to drink.

INSPECTION

A monitoring method called "tick dragging" can help determine if ticks are present around a client's property. To make a drag cloth, attach a wooden stick across the end of a white sheet. Then, attach a cord to both ends of the stick to pull the cloth through vegetation. Every 30-60 seconds, you can check the top or bottom of the sheet to see if any ticks have attached.

PREVENTION

Sanitation is a crucial part of outdoor tick treatment. In fact, 82% of ticks are located within 3 yards of the lawn perimeter, including along woods, stone walls, or shrubs, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Clients should be educated on how landscape modifications can decrease the amount of ticks that are present in parts of the yard. Here are some simple landscaping techniques that can help reduce tick populations in the yard:

- ✓ Remove leaf litter.
- ✓ Clear tall grasses and brush around homes and at the edge of lawns.
- ✓ Place a 3-foot wide barrier of wood chips or gravel between lawns and wooded areas to restrict tick migration into recreational areas.
- ✓ Mow the lawn frequently.
- ✓ Keep playground equipment, decks and patios away from yard edges and trees.

Be prepared for tick season with a combination of products that will help keep customers' property a tick-free zone. Zoëcon has a lineup of highly effective formulations with a variety of active ingredients and applications, so you can be equipped to fight ticks wherever they're hiding. Featuring an insecticide plus synergist, ExciteR™ insecticide products can be applied as a fogging, general surface, space, spot or crack-and-crevice treatment to help combat ticks. For immediate knockdown of ticks without harming ornamental plants or shrubbery, apply Mavrik® Perimeter as a barrier treatment. Lambda 9.7 CS is an encapsulated insecticide that will resist breaking down in heat and UV exposure while providing powerful results. A botanical solution, Essentria® IC-3 Insecticide Concentrate can be applied with confidence around sensitive areas to deliver broad-spectrum insect control.

Learn how to combat ticks and eliminate callbacks with our Tick Fact Sheet at Zoecon.com.



TICK SERVICE:

A Seasonal Sales Opening



Most pest management companies (46 percent) provide seasonal outdoor tick control services, found the PCT 2020 State of the Tick Control Market survey.

Control programs generally run April through October, depending on weather, with treatment occurring every four to seven weeks. “We’ll kind of roll with what mother nature tells us to do,” said Adam Ring, A-Action Pest Control, on his program’s timing.

More than half (51 percent) of PMPs said summer was the busiest season for tick control; 31 percent said spring was the most active time for this service.

Tick control can help open the door


to other sales. “We find that our tick control customers gravitate over to an easier sale to mosquito (control) because they’re already used to somebody spraying something on their yard,” said John Vollmer, who owns Tick Ranger franchises in Newtown and Rocky Hill, Conn.

It’s also a benefit that motivates clients to sign up for more comprehensive yard-pest programs. Even if the primary concern is mosquitoes, knowing that ticks will be controlled as well helps seal the deal for customers, and vice versa, said Ring, whose yard pest program controls mosquitoes, ticks and fleas.

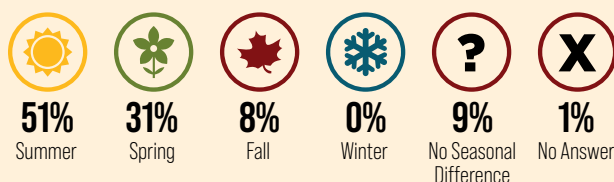
On average, 92.6 percent of tick control services were performed on residential properties. The average call-

back rate was 3.8 percent. Tick Ranger guarantees its service. “We’re very proud of it,” said Vollmer, who retreats a property for free if the scheduled treatment fails within five and a half weeks of application, up until the snow flies in winter.

PMPs said they market their tick control service by highlighting their certified technicians (44 percent), the program’s safety and health benefits (43 percent), their preventive approach (39 percent), control excellence (36 percent) and use of eco-friendly products (29 percent).

In follow-up interviews, they said they use email blasts, internet ads, social media and service vehicle signage to promote their services. 

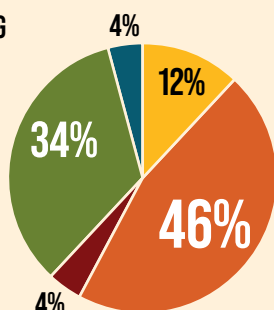
BUSIEST SEASON FOR TICK CONTROL



Source: Readex Research; Respondents: 143

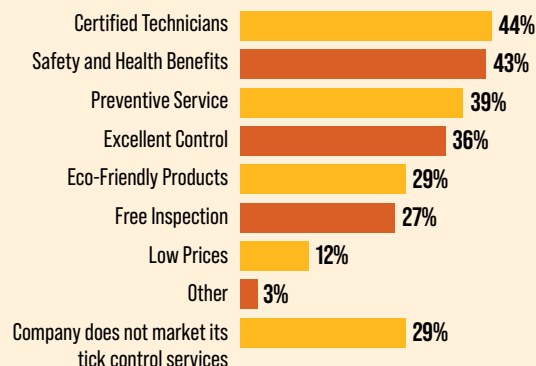
FREQUENCY OF PROVIDING TICK CONTROL SERVICES

- Year-Round
- Seasonally
- Once Per Year
- As Needed
- Other



Source: Readex Research; Respondents: 143

ASPECTS OF TICK CONTROL SERVICE FEATURED IN PEST CONTROL COMPANY MARKETING EFFORTS



Source: Readex Research; Respondents: 143; Respondents could select multiple answers

92.6%

average percentage of tick control provided to residential accounts

Source: Readex Research; Respondents: 143

MANAGEMENT:

Target the Hot Spots

Most PMPs (94 percent) applied appropriately labeled insecticides to control ticks, found the PCT 2020 State of the Tick Control Market survey. For 79 percent of survey respondents, this was the primary measure of control.

In follow-up interviews, some PMPs said they use synthetic pyrethroids labeled for ticks with or without an added insect growth regulator to help control the tick lifecycle. Others use botanical oil-based products, which may require more frequent applications due to weather but appeal to clients who want green alternatives applied to their yards.


According to industry consultant Stoy Hedges, ticks acquire hosts by questing, a process in which they crawl up blades of grass, weeds, and other vegetation and hold out their legs waiting for a host to pass by so they can grab hold. Most ticks are found on vegetation within 12 inches of the ground, so applications of water-based residuals should be directed low into ground-covering vegetation and to the lower branches of shrubs in landscaped areas, he said.

Hot spots for ticks include areas with leaf litter, bushes, tall grass and shade, especially in the ecotone where the lawn meets the wood line. “Ticks are not hanging out in the middle of a well maintained and mowed sunny lawn,” said Todd Leyse, president of Adam’s Pest Control in Medina, Minn.

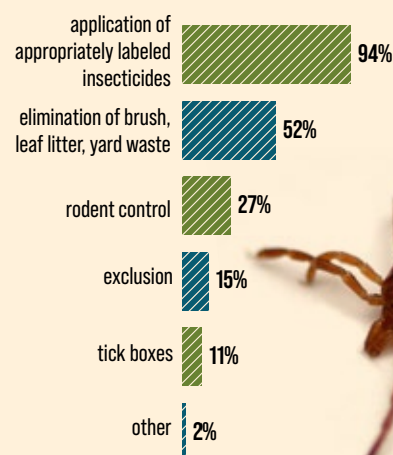
The PCT survey found more than half (52 percent) of PMPs ask customers to eliminate brush, leaf litter and yard waste as part of the tick management program; 27 percent undertake rodent control measures; 15 percent perform exclusion; and 11 percent use tick boxes.

Tick boxes give mice and chipmunks a dose of insecticide when they enter the box to eat bait. A similar device, the tick tube, contains insecticide-treated nesting material, which the rodents bring into their nests. In follow-up interviews, some PMPs said they offer these devices as an add-on to their tick management service.

“The days of spraying and praying are long gone,” said Mark Constantino, Arkadia — Eco Pest Control, who also is exploring habitat management as an add-on to his tick control service. This would include installing three- to five-foot-wide bands of stone or mulch around children play areas and where properties border the woods.

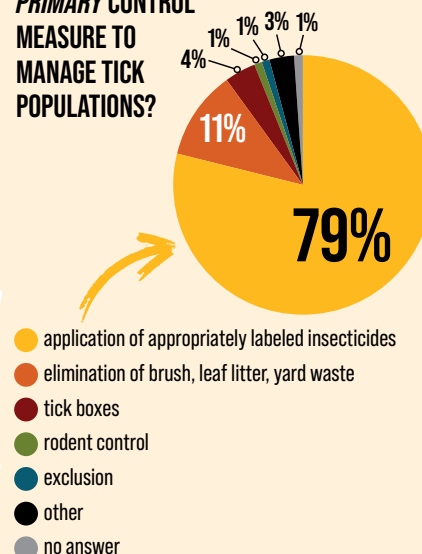
Mohammed El Damir, technical and training director at Adam’s Pest Control, experienced first-hand how the right barrier can reduce tick exposure. “In my home, I found replacement of mulch with gravel kept ticks away from my doorstep,” he said. 

TYPES OF TICK CONTROL MEASURES USED



Source: Readex Research; Respondents: 143; multiple answers

WHAT IS YOUR PRIMARY CONTROL MEASURE TO MANAGE TICK POPULATIONS?



Source: Readex Research; Respondents: 143

TICK SAFETY: **Awareness + Precaution**

According to the PCT 2020 State of the Tick Control Market survey, 41 percent of PMPs said customers were concerned about the public health risks associated with ticks. Clients with children and pets were most likely to call for tick control, they reported in follow-up interviews.

“There’s more reference to ticks in the news and media. Folks are pretty alert to the diseases they carry, of course Lyme disease being the most popular of those diseases,” said Adam Ring, A-Action Pest Control, of public awareness in his market.

In fact, 45 percent of PMPs said they have customers or technicians who have been diagnosed with Lyme disease. “We’ve had several customers inform us that they have contracted Lyme disease, so we know it’s there and they know it’s there,” said Ring.

More than a third (36 percent) of PMPs believe the industry has done an effective job communicating the public health risks associated with ticks, while an almost equal amount — 34 percent — are not sure of this, found the survey.

Setting clear expectations for tick control is a communications challenge. “The fact that we perform a treatment

doesn’t mean that they’ll never experience another tick encounter,” explained Ring.


And if a customer contracts a tick-borne disease while under contract, she could claim your company screwed up, pointed out Todd Leyse, Adam’s Pest Control. “It hasn’t happened, but it could. You wonder if it is worth it,” he said of the risk of offering this service. The PCT survey found 14 percent of companies don’t offer tick control due to liability concerns.

As well, PMPs rely on customers to cut the grass, trim bushes and weeds, and remove leaf litter that harbor ticks to successfully achieve control. “We’re not really getting to the source without their cooperation,” Ring explained.

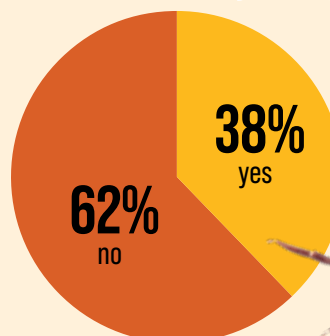
Sometimes communication falls on

deaf ears. “We try to educate as much as possible but there’s always going to be the person that knows better. We definitely deal a lot with that out here,” said Cassi Magnus, Phoenix Pest and Wildlife Control, of customers in her region.

Employee health is another consideration. Most PMPs (62 percent) do not require technicians to apply a repellent to their body or clothing prior to performing a tick control treatment.

The technicians at Arkadia — Eco Pest Control are instructed to wear repellent, pants, long-sleeve shirts, gloves, even to tuck pants into socks. “They’re putting themselves at risk, so they have to take the proper safety precautions,” said Mark Constantino. Even so, employees sometimes have ticks on them after a day in the field, he said. 

**ARE YOUR LOCATION'S
TECHNICIANS REQUIRED
TO APPLY A REPELLENT
TO THEIR BODY OR
CLOTHING PRIOR TO
PERFORMING A TICK
CONTROL TREATMENT?**



Source: Readex Research; Respondents: 143



OUTLOOK:

Weather, COVID-19 Boost Calls

More than half (51 percent) of PMPs expect revenue from tick control services to increase in 2020, found the PCT 2020 State of the Tick Control Market survey.

“We’ve gotten more calls than we have in the past about (tick control) and a lot more clients are adding that on,” said Cassi Magnus, Phoenix Pest and Wildlife Control.

A-Action Pest Control expected revenue from its yard treatment program to increase by 30 percent. “We’re forecasting a strong year in all areas of pest control but ticks especially coming out of the gate,” said Adam Ring.

By early April, John Vollmer of Tick Ranger already had gained 900 new customers and he had yet to advertise his service for this season. His biggest challenge: finding enough staff to do the work. “That would be our hurdle,” he said.

The mild winter will boost tick populations this year. “They’ve already started; they’re already bad,” reported Sherry Tallent, A & A Pest Control, Cuba, Mo., in early April.


“Once the temperatures get up and over 45 (degrees), especially if you’ve got bright sunshine, the ticks are going to be active,” explained Vollmer.

Customers are noticing the ticks because they’re spending

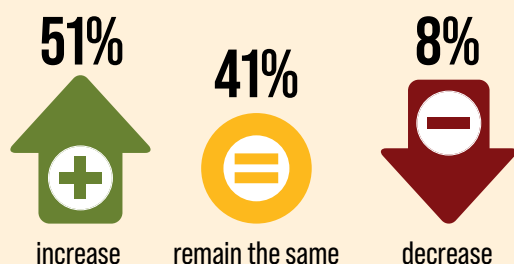


more time in the yard due to COVID-19 stay-at-home orders. Kids are playing outdoors because they’re not in school; people are gardening since they’re furloughed and can’t leave the property.

“The phone’s been ringing off the hook. People want to protect their yards even more so because they’re home and they’re actually seeing these ticks. They want us there yesterday,” said David Whitman, Connecticut Tick Control.

Vollmer, who expected his business to grow to 9,500 customers in 2020, agreed: “They’re all on virus alert. People don’t want the coronavirus and then have Lyme.” 

COMPARED TO 2019, HOW WILL REVENUE FROM TICK CONTROL SERVICES CHANGE IN 2020?



Source: Readex Research; Respondents: 143

ABOUT THE SURVEY

The PCT 2020 State of the Tick Control Market survey was sponsored by Central Life/Zoëcon and compiled by Readex Research, a privately held research firm in Stillwater, Minn.

A sample of 4,460 pest control company owners, operators, executives and technical directors was systematically selected from the PCT database. Data was collected from 187 respondents — a 4 percent response rate — via online survey from March 10-25, 2020. The margin of error for percentages is plus or minus 7.1 percentage points at the 95 percent confidence level. Charts may not add up to 100 percent due to rounding.



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