



THE gatekeeper

Issue 24 // December 2011

The technical newsletter of Maheu & Maheu inc.

All About Voles

By François Casault, Technical Associate

More commonly called a field mouse, the vole is a small rodent found throughout Canada. The term “field mouse” is often used to describe any number of small rural mammals that resemble mice. The vole is easily distinguished by its short tail and stouter body but unlike the mouse, its ears are hidden under its fur.

There are several species of voles. Those most often encountered are the meadow vole (*Microtus pennsylvanicus*). These small rodents do not tend to try to enter and settle in homes. Instead, they prefer fields, meadows, clearings, thickets, and swamps where they burrow complex networks of tunnels and paths.

This small crop pest feeds on leaf stems, fruits, seeds, bulbs, and most plants that grow in its habitat. Active all winter long, the vole moves about under the snow and will gnaw tree bark, stems, and the twigs on saplings.



Easy-to-apply preventive measures

To avoid attracting voles and encouraging their moving in near homes, we suggest you apply good management practices to the surrounding area. For example, eliminate readily available food sources like vegetables or fruit left in the garden at the end of the season. For the same reason, seeds, bird seed, and compost heaps should be made inaccessible to rodents. We strongly recommend you cut tall grass so the vole's predators can better spot them.

In areas where the vole population is high, we recommend you install a fine mesh fence around the root ball when planting saplings. The base of the sapling must also be protected so that the small rodents can't get to the tender bark they love. At the start of the winter season, we also recommended you compact the snow around the base of the sapling to prevent the voles from approaching from under the snow.

Flush out intruders and take action!

To recap, the “little four-legged intruders” who sometimes find their way into homes in the fall and catch many people by surprise are in most cases mice and not voles! Remember that mice will happily nest in attics and structural voids.

To get rid of small rodents that have set up shop in your home, opt for mechanical traps (the conventional mouse trap) baited with peanut butter, as long as no one in the home is allergic to it. Do not use rodenticides inside the home because you could end up with a foul odor. In fact, there are no rodenticides that dry out dead animals without leaving behind a nasty odor.

Of course, you need to find and seal the openings that allow these little critters to enter your house. Don't forget that any opening larger than a dime must be plugged!

When it comes to rodenticides, don't believe everything you hear!

For example:

- “If you use this rodenticide, the rodent will go outside looking for water and die there.”
- “With this rodenticide, the rodent dies and dries with no smell.”

Nothing is further from the truth! With any rodenticide, the rodent is much more likely to die in an inaccessible location, usually in its nest. As for the smell, it has nothing to do with the type of rodenticide. Rather it is related to the size of the animal, and the temperature and humidity present. For more on this topic, consult issue 11 of *The Gatekeeper*.

Nothing Beats Heat!

By Michel Maheu, B.Sc., Biologist

The efficacy of heat as a means to destroy insects in all stages of development is well proven.

Maheu&Maheu, with their 15 years of experience in heat treatments, is now pushing the limits of this efficacy with the introduction of its explosion-proof thermal units.

The resurgence of bed bugs has rekindled interest in this technique, which first emerged in the mid-1950s. In addition, the search for alternatives to methyl bromide for treating flour mills and food processing plants has led to refinements in heat-based methods to eradicate insect pest problems. On a small scale, using heat is relatively easy, but when it comes to treating establishments that are several thousand cubic meters, the degree of difficulty increases.

No need to halt production

For the food processing sector, the main advantage of heat treatment is that, when localized to a specific area, it can be carried out while the plant is operating. Thus, it is possible to treat silos while the factory is running at full capacity.

However, some environments require that the equipment be explosion proof. This is where the challenge increases dramatically and where there are only a few operators up to the task. After a two-year developmental period, Maheu&Maheu now carries out such jobs using explosion-proof thermal generators, and with excellent results.

For more information on ways to use this innovative technology, please contact our technical director, Martin St-Pierre, by email: mst-pierre@maheu-maheu.com or at 1-800-463-2186.



British Retail Consortium (BRC) Standards Gaining Popularity in Canada

By Guilaine Pageau, M.Env., Technical Associate

Originally designed to ensure food safety in the retail food sector, BRC standards are now being adopted by food processing groups who are distancing themselves from other standards, like AIB. Developed in the United Kingdom, BRC standards were first conceived to protect consumers at the end of the distribution chain. Much more user-friendly than other standards, they are uncompromising when it comes to food safety.

In 2007, the leading groups of North American food processing auditors, like the American Institute of Baking, Cook & Thurber, and Yum Brands, joined a team representing the National Pest Management Association (NPMA) to create the NPMA Food Standards. However, the complexity of these standards and the fact that the most demanding auditors continue to issue specific requests—often with no added value—have ensured that they remain largely unknown in Canada. Curiously, our American partners in the Food Protection Alliance recently confirmed that these standards are just as unpopular in the U.S.!

Canadian experts in food safety foresee that the BRC standards will become much more prevalent in the coming years. For more information on this subject, visit the British Retail Consortium website: <http://www.brcglobalstandards.com/>.

Maheu&Maheu Ranks 40th in North America

By Jean-Philippe Tremblay, Director of Corporate Development

The trade magazine *Pest Control Technology* recently published its annual top 100 list of leading companies in the North American pest management industry. Maheu&Maheu leapt ahead five positions to #40 this year!

With 105 employees in five regional offices, the firm, which has been in business in Quebec, Ontario, and New Brunswick for 78 years, generated \$14 million in sales in 2010.

Maheu&Maheu covers Canada coast to coast through its strong network of partners. It has also been a member of the Food Protection Alliance since 2004 which allows it to extend its service to the United States.

Is the Pyrethrin Shortage Over?

The pest management manufacturing industry regularly faces a shortage of non-synthetic raw materials. This is true for pyrethrins. Natural pyrethrins are derived from the chrysanthemum flower (*Chrysanthemum cinerariaefolium*), which grows primarily in Kenya (69%) and in some other regions of the world, including Tanzania, Rwanda, Tasmania, Papua New Guinea, and France.

Disastrous harvests



Crops were very bad three years ago and things didn't improve in 2009 and 2010. The 2011 crop promised to be better, but did not suffice for manufacturers to compensate for the lack of active ingredient needed to meet the strong demand for these products.

Will the 2012 crop return to normal? We hope so, because there are more than 450 pyrethrin-based products registered in Canada. • *MM*

Maheu&Maheu Invests \$3 million in a LEED Project

By Louis-Philippe Maheu, *CMA, Chief Financial Officer*

November 24, 2011, the largest pest management company in Quebec has announced the construction of a new headquarters to house its storage facilities and Quebec City/Chaudière-Appalaches regional office. This will be a LEED certified building in line with the company's sustainable development policy. The new building will be located at 605 rue des Rocailles in Quebec City. Meanwhile Maheu&Maheu will continue operating out of its headquarters of the past 25 years on rue Bouvier.

This \$3 million investment will consolidate 50 jobs in the immediate Quebec City area. The ultramodern facilities will further the growth of this third-largest player in Canada, whose offices no longer meet its needs despite recent expansions and renovations.

Appointments



Marc Guénette at the helm of the Quebec City/Chaudière-Appalaches (QCA) regional office

In April, Marc Guenette joined Maheu&Maheu as Regional Director of the QCA office. He was supported through the transition by Jean-Philippe Tremblay, who held this position for the past four years. Marc has extensive experience as a manager who operated his own pet store for twenty years. He worked for a year as a pest control technician and, prior to that, was employed to capture and relocate small wild animals from urban settings. We are certain this skilled communicator will ably stay the course and manage growth at the QCA office.

Jean-Philippe Tremblay promoted to Corporate Development

From the time of his arrival in 2007 at Maheu&Maheu as director of the Quebec City / Chaudière-Appalaches (QCA) regional office, Jean-Philippe has distinguished himself in sales and solicitation. Since we didn't have a full-time employee dedicated to marketing and business development, it made perfect sense to offer him this newly-created, tailor-made position. Jean-Philippe moved gradually to his new functions, while also acting as transition partner for Marc Guénette. Jean-Philippe now acts as liaison between headquarters and regional offices, facilitating uniform deployment of our business development strategies. At this time he is fully engaged in his new position.

Gary Birnie moves on to the Technical Department

Gary has held various positions over the years. Because of his versatility, customers often don't know what his official role is within the organization! Last January he joined the technical department as technical manager. Now he provides practical training to new technicians while supporting them in the field. Gary will retain responsibility for the major accounts he already managed while having a hand in quality assurance.

Best wishes to all three of you!

• *MM*

One of our Own: Denis Lebel



As he often likes to recount, Denis clearly recalls his first day at Maheu&Maheu, October 26, 1984! A biologist by training, he is also a passionate trapper. He therefore had a good base to build on to succeed in the pest management field. He also helped us push the envelope of rodent control by sharing some of his trapping tips.

After his start as a technician at the Trois-Rivières regional

office, he became its director in 1999. In 2002 he moved on to become regional director of the Centre-du-Quebec office, a position he holds to this day. Denis has trained a generation of technicians, reminding them to wear their “mouse costume” when it comes time to eliminate a mouse population on a farm or in a feed mill. He enjoys managing the workforce while on the road and adorns his truck with a rainbow of Post-Its so he doesn’t forget a thing—despite his excellent memory!

Among his hobbies and past-times, archery is a real passion, and one he puts to use to hunt big game such as moose, bear, and deer. He occasionally takes off for Northern Quebec to bag his share of caribou. Denis is a skilled hunter, so his visits to the local butcher shop are few and far between! Not that he’s a vegetarian—far from it—he and his family live on his annual hunting catch.

Looking after his woodlot is a mission that helps him get away from it all, and he goes there to recharge his batteries. Denis is great with his hands—he designed the pigeon feeders the company has used over the years. Even more impressive, he built his chalet from scratch on an enchanting site near Lac Missionnaire in the municipality of Trois-Rives.

A proud resident of Hérouxville (Lac-à-la-Tortue), Denis has his own colorful way of talking and is particularly fond of employing metaphors to get across his point of view. As he likes to say, it’s a long haul in the jalopy to get to the regional office, but the Internet “spares him a lot of trips”!

• *MM*

All the staff at Maheu&Maheu joins in
wishing you an excellent 2012.

May the New Year bring you
success, happiness, and good health.

