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How to Select a Professional Pest Control Service

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Household and landscape pests like Florida's warm weather just as much as residents, which mean we have robust pest populations that are always looking for food, a home, or both. In order to keep pests from doing too much damage, residents may contact professional pest control services to control household and landscape pests. However, not all services are created equal. Before you choose a company, look into the effectiveness of pest control programs and customer service.

First, talk to your neighbors about their pest control service and why they selected that company. Also inquire if they have had any negative experiences with other companies. The Better Business Bureau is another resource to consult to determine if there are any outstanding claims against a company.

Speaking to other people isn't the only thing to do because one company does not work for everyone. There are many other items to consider such as if anyone in your family is sensitive to chemicals. If so, does a company offer pesticide alternatives that will give you the level of control you want but be cautious if product claims sound too good to be true. Determine what type of contract would work best for you. Contracts may range from year round regular visits to the homeowner contacting the company when there is a pest infestation.

Once these issues have been addressed, get bids from multiple companies to compare prices, services, and contract types and research these companies. Ask for references and call them. Ask companies if they have a certificate of insurance or surety bond, which Florida law requires. Ask for the company's business license number or contact Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services for the records. Finally, ask if the company belongs to a professional association, which provide educational opportunities to keep members updated on new technologies and developments in the field.

When you have picked a company, carefully read the contract and understand the service agreement terms before signing. Does the contract run continuously until you notify the company to discontinue service? Is the contract only for a specified length of time? Will the company re-treat if adequate pest control was not attained? Make sure the contract includes the name and address of the pest control company. The following issues should be considered as well: are there clauses that state why a contract can be cancelled, is there an arbitration clause that states how disputes will be settled, and do termite contracts contain retreatment clauses and damage replacement clauses. Finally, read the small print, look for any disclaimers, and ask about anything you don't understand.

Consider company specials and sales pitches carefully. The company may try to provide you services that you don't need, such as treating for pests that aren't present in your home or lawn. Also, be cautious when a company has a pricing structure that is based on quantity of material used. This structure could cost you a lot of money depending on the pest being treated. For example, termite control can require hundreds of gallons of product to provide adequate control.

Selecting a professional pest control business that works for you isn't as simple as picking one from the phonebook, but spending some time talking to neighbors and researching companies can help you find the business that is best for you.

Reference:

Fishel, F.M., (2005) "Selecting a professional pest control service," University of Florida/ IFAS Fact Sheet PI-38.