Message from the President
By: Travis Lucas

Dear Fellow NSPCA Members,

I want to begin my first newsletter article by saying that it is a privilege and a great opportunity to have been elected to serve as the president of the Nebraska State Pest Control Association. As past president, Jeff Voelker was an outstanding leader of our association. Jeff is a great guy with some unique expertise in wildlife control. Where many of our backgrounds stem from the insect end of the business, we are often intimidated by calls about wildlife problems. If you have questions about how to handle some of these, Jeff is a fantastic resource. That is, unless you are inside of Jeff’s service area, then just recommend Critter Control!

Being able to network with members of our association and benefitting from their experience is one of the things that make membership and involvement in the NSPCA so valuable. We are all interested in developing the knowledge and ability of ourselves, our companies, and our employees. My own family’s business has an extensive history with the association dating back 25 years to my late grandfather’s membership. I am fortunate to have a legacy committed to education and a dedication to our industry.

As pest management professionals, we don’t have to look far to see evidence of the fact that we provide a vital service to the public. We protect buildings from damage, filth, and structural decay. We protect people from nuisance pests, food contamination, disease, psychological stress, and sometimes deadly allergic reactions. Fortunately, we have customers and a public that see, on a daily basis, the value of our services as well. Unfortu-

nately, it can take one incident to reverse decades of the positive image building our industry has accomplished.

On March 20th a family of four were found in their room at an upscale vacation resort in the Virgin Islands, the father unresponsive, and the mother and two sons convulsing with seizures. An ensuing investigation found that two days prior a product containing Methyl Bromide had been applied to a room below theirs by the resort’s pest control contractor, Terminix.

I have been involved in this industry for the last thirteen plus years and had never heard of methyl bromide being used in a structural setting, so I had to do a bit of research. Beyond the science and labeling of the product itself, I found some pretty shocking information. In 1987, the U. S. and 26 other nations signed on to the Montreal Protocol, international treaty developed to protect the environment from ozone depleting products. In 1993 the EPA froze the amount of methyl bromide being produced and applied, and in the years following the amounts were significantly reduced until it was phased out altogether in January of 2005. What I could not find however, was any explanation for why a pest management firm would possess the product, much less use it in a way that grossly violated the label.

To condense this into a take home lesson for us as applicators, knowledge of and compliance to regulations and labels are important, sometimes deadly important. To prevent harmful exposure to people and the environment we need to make sure that all applicators have been trained to READ THE LABEL. Think through the application process at every job to minimize risks and potential exposures. Don’t keep long-expired product in your inventory. Take advantage of the Department of Agriculture’s pesticide disposal events. Keep your inventory secured, organized, and up to date so that you know

Continued on Next Page.
That being said, these types of occurrences are rare, and the majority of those involved in our business take great care to ensure that even minor cases of exposure and misapplication don’t happen. The fact that we belong to an association of professionals such as ours demonstrates that we are dedicated to a high level of professionalism, safety, training, and the image of our industry.

I look forward to the coming years of serving the Nebraska State Pest Control Association, alongside our Vice President Shawn Ryan, and the rest of our board of directors. I encourage everyone reading this newsletter to get involved in the association if you are not already. One of the many important benefits of your involvement is the input that we have on the content of the Urban Pest Management Conference, which can make a large impact on the relevance of the education being provided. If you know someone who used to be involved and isn’t anymore, reach out to them. If you know someone new in the business, tell them about the association. If you are already involved and you have ideas on how to make our association more valuable, tell any of us who serve on the board.

I hope everyone has an enjoyable and profitable Spring.
There was nothing pretty about the just concluded 104th Legislature, First Session. Filibusters littered debate like the alley behind the Last Chance Saloon. Senators of the conservative persuasion were adamantly opposed to, well, everything. A few hardcore Ringers (right wingers) spoke so much they actually believed others were paying attention. If you were one of those who tune in to Nebraska Educational Television for gavel-to-gavel coverage of your Unicameral, 1.) You can appreciate the constant rotation of mind-numbing 5-minute speeches designed to delay votes, and 2.) You really should get a life.

Death penalty repeal, driver licenses for kids of illegal immigrants and an increase in the gas tax were headline grabbers. GOP loyalists are spazzing out. Some are even ready to burn the old Unicam at the stake and replace it with (shudder) a Bicameral.

The Lingers (left wingers) got smacked around as well. This was their third trip to the old Medicaid expansion honey hole, and the "save our world" gang were summarily escorted to the door again. Also, senators won't spend more money on dependent kids either. How cold.

But, that is not the whole story. Speaker Galen Hadley handled a tough group of prima egos in statesmanlike fashion, and managed to pass 227 bills this session. Not that each bill is a wonderfully crafted monument to the future of mankind, but that's a lot of heavy lifting and patience on the Speaker's part.

The balanced budget passed with limited new spending and enough additional property tax relief so the Governor can claim victory. Speaking of Governor Ricketts, he got a couple bloody noses this year, but hey, he's a freshman and so are the kids on his team. Bet he won't make the same mistakes next year.

Legislation that will become law:

**LB158** - Reinstates a favorable affirmative defense of employee misrepresentation for employers to avoid paying benefits.

**LB 610** - Increases the fixed motor fuels tax rate by 6 cents (1.5 cents each year for four years).
Catering Content to Different Social Media Networks
By: Missy Henriksen

While social media has proven to be an ever-changing platform, one aspect remains consistent through it all—what works well for one network won’t necessarily translate to another. A tweet that garners thousands of retweets and high audience engagement likely won’t have the same impact on Facebook, just as a photo posted to Pinterest may fall flat when shared on Instagram. Each network’s unique format means content is consumed differently by its users, and that marketers must carefully consider their social media strategies to ensure they are making the most of these valuable opportunities to connect with consumers.

That’s not to say that fresh and unique content needs to be developed in a silo for each individual network. Instead, brands should make the most of their content by repurposing it to fit the preferences of each network’s audience. From when to utilize photography and video assets to how to determine the appropriate tone of voice depending on the network—communicating via social media requires a strategy that takes into account the consumption habits of each network’s audience. Resist the urge to take a “one-size-fits-all” approach in the interest of saving time and energy in favor of crafting posts, tweets and pins that help your brand stand out in a landscape that is becoming increasingly cluttered and competitive. Here’s how to ensure you’re making the most of your presence on the top social media networks:

**Facebook**

Each day, 1500 possible stories are filtered through an average Facebook user’s News Feed. However, due to the algorithm Facebook has implemented, only 20 percent of them actually end up making it into a user feed. Consider that fact serious motivation to craft posts that grab the attention of your fans and their individual networks. Facebook is forcing brands to be more aware of their target audience and to create content that is relevant to their interests. As a result, there is more pressure on you to understand why fans are even following you on social media in the first place. More often than not, consumers choose to follow brands that can offer tips, insight or deals they find valuable and useful. Those who follow service providers, such as pest control companies, are likely looking for content related to the overall services provided and the expert opinion or advice the company can share. Once you define what is relevant for your audience, it’s time to create or choose content accordingly, and find a way to make it memorable and engaging.

Posts that incorporate quality visuals, such as photos, videos and link previews, are known to achieve higher levels of engagement than those without visual accompaniments—they are also given more weight by Facebook when being filtered for the newsfeed.

After landing on the perfect asset to share, put just as much thought into the words that appear beside it. Recent research has found that Facebook posts with more than 80 words achieve greater engagement than those with less, but be sure to remain succinct and choose your words—and punctuation carefully.

When appropriate, don’t be afraid to use exclamation points and inject humor or prompts for interaction, such as questions that inspire your fans to respond. In fact, posts that ask questions garner 23 percent more engagement on average. Finally, take the time to understand when your audience is active on Facebook to maximize your chances of making it into their news feeds. Posts published after work hours typically experience higher rates of engagement than those posted during or before the workday. And, while not every business is posting on the weekends, posts shared on Sundays have been known to garner more interaction than those posted midweek.

**Twitter**

On average, 500 million tweets are sent each day by Twitter’s base of 232 million monthly active users.

That enormous traffic and activity creates intense competition for brands fighting to achieve consumer engagement on the hugely popular network. In addition, making the most of the 140-character limit, and finding creative and useful hashtags to incorporate into tweets may seem daunting to marketers who have become comfortable with the typically longer Facebook post format. However, custom content need not be crafted for each social network, and there’s nothing wrong with taking a post that was created for Facebook and shortening it for use on Twitter.

An easy first step in repurposing content is trimming the post to fit within Twitter’s aforementioned 140-character limit. Even better, find a way to come in just under that limit with a tweet that clocks in at 100 characters or less. As research has found that those tweets achieve a 17 percent higher engagement rate. While keeping things short and sweet might prove challenging, keep in mind the large number of your followers who are likely rapidly scrolling through their Twitter feeds from their smartphones.

Use the same restraint when selecting hashtags to incorporate, and limit yourself to no more than two per tweet—a good rule of thumb across all social media platforms. Whichever hashtags you choose, make sure they reinforce the theme of your overall message, and while it may be tempting to use a popular or trending hashtag, don’t force it if it
isn’t appropriate or going to resonate with followers.

As with Facebook, incorporate photography into tweets for a better chance of achieving click-throughs from busy, highly visual followers. And as with all social media networks, carefully consider your posting calendar to capitalize on the most active Twitter times. Data has shown that the highest number of clicks appear between 1pm and 3pm during the week, and the best time for retweets is from 4pm to 5pm on Fridays.

**Instagram**

While it’s becoming increasingly clear across all social media networks that the incorporation of visual assets is a critical part of the overall strategy, this is perhaps most true for Instagram. The photosharing site is based entirely around unique and authentic imagery and video posted by brands and individuals alike. As of December 2014, Instagram had a reported 300 million monthly users, and it continues to grow in popularity as the network has begun to allow select brands to test out new advertising options. Although it’s true that the content generated by some industries, such as hospitality and food, lends itself toward interaction on Instagram more than others, hundreds of brands outside of those markets are also finding success on the network.

One of the keys to establishing a following, in addition to engaging with and retaining those followers, lies in developing a library of images that are aesthetically pleasing and interesting. Again, there’s no need to reinvent the wheel when it comes to sharing imagery on Instagram, since a successful social strategy will mean you are already incorporating those visuals on your other networks. Instead, repurpose photography and video assets and craft accompanying captions that jive with the messages you’ve already posted and tweeted. Utilize the same hashtags you’ve used on Facebook and Twitter, and consider length and punctuation choices for maximum engagement. Just as with Facebook, find ways to get your users to comment and like your posts by asking questions and encouraging responses. Successful brands post up to two times a day on Instagram, so develop a calendar that allows your audience a chance to interact with your posts on a daily basis.

**Bottom Line**

When it comes time to develop a social media strategy for your brand, consider starting with Facebook and adapting your content and calendar to fit each additional network. Avoid the urge to copy and paste the same content across the board, and instead take the time to carefully craft posts and tweets that will make the biggest impact on your followers. The time investment will pay off in increased engagement and brand awareness.

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**Mobile Phone Technology can now be used in the fight against rodent pests - High-tech radio monitoring of low-tech mouse and rat traps**

*By: Pest Control News*

Getting rid of rats and mice, particularly around factories and farms, is of paramount importance. Second generation anticoagulant rodenticides are commonly used but these can persist in the environment, move up the food chain and recent research has detected traces of them in our owls and birds of prey. Some rats are thought to have developed resistance to them, leading to the emergence of anticoagulant resistant rodents in some areas. Considering the need to follow an Integrated Pest Management (IPM) approach for the control of rodent pests, and the need to use rodenticides as a last resort, there will be an increased requirement for the use of traps.

The catching of rodents in traps means that no poisonous substances that can migrate through food chains are ingested by the rodents. However, larger premises may require placement of quite a number of traps, and daily monitoring of these traps to ensure that catches are promptly and humanely dealt with - a time consuming exercise. The cost to businesses could become prohibitive. So, imagine an attachment that can send an SMS message when something sets the trap off and thus can be attended to promptly; a radio monitored rodent trap. Such traps have now been designed and tested. They work with most professionally used mouse and rat traps.

These traps are linked to a remote monitoring unit. When a trap activates, a coded signal is sent to a monitoring unit. An alert is then forwarded by email containing information about the time, date and location of the trap activation, to the pest control company concerned.

The Campaign for Responsible Rodenticide Use Ireland (CRRU Ireland) welcomes this initiative. Established in September 2013 to promote the responsible and safe use of rodenticides, CRRU has been working to raise awareness of the environmental impact of the misuse of rodenticides, whether by professional pest controllers, farmers or others in the food, pharmaceutical, IT and other sectors. To this end CRRU Ireland in association with IASIS (Irish Agricultural Supply Industry Standards Ltd) runs one day.

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1. Open Meeting: President Jeff Voelker called the Meeting to order at 12:30 p.m. He thanked the members for their participation in the annual conference and for supporting the Association. He asked for self introductions.

2. Secretary’s Report: Andy Licht stated that the minutes from the prior year’s membership meeting were included in the packets passed out to the members. Jeff Voelker asked the members to review the minutes. Motion by Brad Kuiper, seconded by Carl Braun: “The minutes be approved as published.” The motion passed.

3. Treasurer’s Report: Andy Licht reviewed the financial statements for fiscal year ending October 31, 2014. Total assets were $35,191.54 with liabilities of $22,872.13, made up primarily of the Restricted Scholarship Funds of $22,846.06, leaving equity at $12,319.41. There was discussion on ways to increase the membership and reach out to potential new members. Motion by Travis Lucas, seconded by Dave Ryan: “The Treasurer’s Report be approved as presented.” The motion passed.

4. Association Report: Andy Licht updated the members on the changes with the management company and new staff additions that were available to assist members. Andy covered the key areas of service and the key staff that would handle those areas.

5. Conference Report: Members discussed the Urban Pest Management Conference. There was discussion about ways to avoid conflicting dates with other meetings. The exhibitor reception was a good addition to give time to the sponsors to visit with the attendees. Members discussed ideas for future year’s topics for sessions, including the possibility of having an ACE certification training session and exam. It was agreed to get feedback from members about their interest in participating in the ACE Certification Program to determine whether the Association could hold the testing in conjunction with the UPM Conference the following year.

6. Legislative Report: Andy Licht updated the members on the status of the current legislative session, including the newly elected Senators and Executive office holders. He discussed legislative bills and Association lobbyist, Mick Mines was monitoring. Bills of interested include, sales tax collection, income tax rates, property tax, employment and wage issues. He stated the introduction period for new bills to be introduced had passed and this year’s session appears as though it will be dominated by some large issues including prison reform and Medicaid expansion.

7. Board Elections:
   A. Travis Lucas was nominated to the position of president. With no further nominations, it was moved and seconded, “Cease nominations and elect Travis Lucas to a two year term as President.” The motion passed.
   B. Shawn Ryan was nominated to the position of vice president. With no further nominations, it was moved and seconded, “Close nominations and elect Shawn Ryan to a two year term as Vice President.” The motion passed.
   C. Carl Braun was nominated to fill the District 2 position on the Board of Directors. With no further nominations, it was moved and seconded, “Close nominations and elect Carl Braun to a three year term for the 2nd District position.” The motion passed.
   D. Darrel Giesenahgen was nominated to be re-elected to the District 5 board position. With no further nominations, it was moved and seconded, “Close nominations and elect Darrel Geisenhagen to a three term as the District 5 board member.” The motion passed.

8. Award Presentation: Travis Lucas presented a special plaque to outgoing President Jeff Voelker for his dedication and service to the Association and pest control industry.

9. Jeff Voelker opened up the floor for any additional topics. There was further discussion about future dates for potential meetings and ways to avoid conflicts with other regional and national meetings.

10. Adjournment: Jeff Voelker asked for a motion to adjourn the meeting. Motion by Travis Lucas seconded by Dave Ryan: “The meeting be adjourned.” The motion passed.

Respectfully Submitted,
Nebraska State Pest Control Association
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