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Clover Connection

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National pest control pros scurry to Texas Rodent Academy

AgriLife Extension is on the cutting edge of many educational programs and research. While we don't like to think about rodents and pest control, it's pretty neat to know that AgriLife is paving the way in top of the line training for pest control. Recently, professionals from companies in Utah, Georgia, New York and across Texas converged in Dallas for three days to train alongside Texas A&M AgriLife Extension entomologists on controlling rodent infestations.

“We were especially pleased to get Dr. Bobby Corrigan, one of the top rodentologists in the country, to reinvent his New York City Rodent Academy training here in Texas,” said Janet Hurley, training organizer and AgriLife Extension integrated pest management program specialist in Dallas.

Texas Rodent Academy participants slithered through tiny spaces inside a mock industrial kitchen; peered behind bushes to find real rat tracks and droppings; and scoured attic spaces for signs of rodent pests. Trainees took classroom courses on pest identification, studied best practices for rodent control and practiced talking to news media about pest control issues.

A mixed offering of classroom and field activities is customary in Rodent Academy trainings, said Dr. Mike Merchant, AgriLife Extension urban entomologist in Dallas.

“A lot of these companies have in-house training, but we're able to offer a cut above in our quality of education,” he said. “Our teachers are often university scientists, including some of the best among industry professionals. Our training facility is also unique in Texas, and one of the few hands-on facilities like it in the country.”

Corrigan, a New York City urban rodentologist and national consultant, helped Merchant lead classroom instruction and real-world exercises at the IPM Experience House, a mock-

environment training facility at the Texas A&M AgriLife Research and Extension Center at Dallas.

“This was a full-on educational offering for rodent control using IPM, or integrated pest management,” Merchant said. “That means we’re instructing on a variety of control tactics, not just chemicals. This is how we lower risks of developing insecticide resistance among pests and minimize environmental risks for people.”

Corrigan, when asked to compare the Texas training to others he’s conducted across the United States, said, “the courses were well-designed and everything was ready when the students showed up. It is critical to have all those logistical items online and ready to roll, so it stacked up very well.”

Go to <http://ipmhouse.tamu.edu> for more information on upcoming industry training and public course offerings at the IPM Experience House.

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