

Electronic 'pied pipers' not pulling them in, claim pest control agencies

Plug-in pest control systems seem to be popular because of clever marketing rather than performance. A newspaper advertisement in The Citizen of 5 June and accompanying text hailing a new Australian import as "the new pied piper in town" was greeted with doubtful smiles from the local pest controlling industry.

They referred to a lack of scientific evidence that such devices work and also to a recent response from Dr Andy Brigham, general technical manager of Rentokil's business support centre in Europe about the particular device.

Dr Brigham explains that it works on the principle of setting up a 'pulse' in the ring main of a building, which is meant to be sensed by pests and scare them away.

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"When they came to the UK we allowed them to try it in a major food retailing outlet. They were given free rein and failed. Then the guy said they needed to completely change all their electrical wiring as this was stopping it from working. None of this is in their literature and they left the UK market very quickly."

He does acknowledge however that an ultrasonic unit made in the UK was found to have some effect over a small area, such as a living room or a garage.

"But it's very limited, and no good for any other markets, or larger, more complex areas. We also had a brief look at electromagnetism, and there was no evidence of any effect at all by the unit tested."

The author of an article published on the internet seems to confirm the growing lack of confidence in these electronic gadgets.

"It illustrates that 25 years of credible research of electronic devices has failed to come up with concrete evidence that they work and that their popularity is based on marketing rather than performance," states Russ Frank, who has been in the pest controlling business for the same number of years.

"Although universities tested many different ultrasonic pest repellents under a variety of conditions against many different pests details of their effectiveness remain vague and it is clear that scientists have still not been able to verify that they work as advertised," he concludes.

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