

## Guidance for Evaluating Residential Pest Management Proposals

University of Florida / IFAS Palm Beach County Cooperative Extension Service



Laura Sanagorski, Environmental Horticulture Extension Agent  
 Frank Dowdle, Agricultural Safety Extension Agent  
 Bill Schall, Commercial Horticulture Extension Agent

♦♦♦

The evaluation of pest management proposals can be difficult for property managers and homeowners who must be experts in many areas. When evaluating proposals, whether for whiteflies or another landscape pest, we recommend the following guidelines and strongly encourage you to **compare a minimum of three bids for the same exact specifications** before you consider awarding a contract to any company, regardless of the cost. If bids are not for identical services, there is no way to accurately compare them.

♦♦♦

Minimally, your specifications should include:

- The active ingredient and strength of application (in rate of active ingredient per area).** Most active ingredients are available under a number of brand names and often cover a range of strengths. Pest control professionals are required by law to follow the instructions on the label, and are not allowed to exceed the labeled application rate, but do have flexibility in applying rates that are lower than label maximums. It is recommended that product name and formulation should also be provided, but rate and active ingredient are most critical for accurate decisions.
- Application method.** Is it a foliar spray, soil drench, root zone granular, basal bark spray, or trunk injection? Costs vary significantly among methods. Also, are soil treatments being watered in by you or the company?
- Length of guarantee.** Most pest control applications include a guarantee; these generally range from six months to one year.
- Which trees, plants, and areas will be treated, and when.** Time of year can be very important with soil treatments. Also, when are re-treatments, if any going to occur.
- Written proposal and documentation of problems** identified on site. Your pest control professional should provide all of the above in writing as well as what problems were observed and on which plant materials. Specifics should be given with no vague statements or generalizations.

If your proposals are missing any of the above, it is not possible to make an accurate selection or compare multiple proposals.

♦♦♦

When bidding to provide work on a property you own or manage, all pest control companies should:

- Provide up to date **company business license and proof of property damage and bodily injury insurance** upon request. This is required of all businesses.
- Provide individual **pest control operator's certificate**. This will be in the form of a current identification card affixed with the employee's signature and current photograph, issued by the FL Department of Agriculture. Florida law requires the applicator carry his/her pest control ID card with them.
- Provide **client references** for similar services upon request. Companies who provide excellent customer service should have happy clients to refer you to. You can also check on the complaint record for your top 2 or 3 possible choices by contacting the FDACS, Bureau of Entomology and Pest Control at 850.617.7997. A fee is charged for printed copies.
- Drive clearly marked, **tidy vehicle with company name** and phone numbers - indicators of attention to detail and professionalism.

Remember, the label is the law; be sure to use products only in a manner consistent with the manufacturer's directions on the labels. Please use and ensure that others use pesticides safely.

\*\*\*