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Hygiene Group interrupts bugs' sex lives

A leading food industry cleaning company is using science to disrupt moth mating cycles and prevent them contaminating chocolate bars.

The tropical warehouse moth – ephestia cautella

Hygiene Group is using pheremone technology to confuse male tropical warehouse moths, whose larvae can chew through foil wrapping.

The biological solution – which uses insect pheremones in place of traditional pesticides – is part of a long-term trial in conjunction with Exosect Ltd, a research and development company which specialises in environmentally friendly insect pest control.

An electrostatically-charged food grade wax powder soaked in female moth pheremone is used to attract male moths, which become covered in female pheremone.

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Other male moths then try to mate with the female pheremone-covered males, disrupting mating and egg-laying cycles.

Hygiene Group pest control division manager Dave Maxwell said: “It’s called ‘Auto-Confusion’, and where we’ve introduced it we’ve seen tropical warehouse moth numbers decline.

“It’s not a stand-alone solution, but is highly effective when used alongside regular cleaning processes, and without it there would have to be more cleaning done with pesticide sprays.”

Hygiene Group has been using the process for three years, passing its findings and data back to Exosect, and expects to continue the trial for another year. It is the only hygiene management services provider using the process in the chocolate production environment.

The tropical warehouse moth – ephestia cautella – is now indigenous to the UK, having been introduced via imported cocoa beans used in chocolate-making. Females lay up to 350 eggs in their short – 18-day – lives.

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Note to Editors
Hygiene has grown from modest beginnings more than 20 years ago to become the largest and leading supplier of hygiene management in the UK. It can be visited at www.hygiene.co.uk

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