

A PCO's trapping treatment struck out a team of yellow jackets in a baseball stadium.

Program Hits Home Run

BY MIKE GOLDSTEIN

A pest control operator (PCO) at Waterfront Park, Trenton, N.J., recently batted 1,000 against what park officials call an "invasion" of German yellow jackets. In fact, using a non-poisonous yellow jacket and flying insect trap, he caught more than 70,000 yellow jackets in a two-month period during summer 1995.

Waterfront Park is home to the Trenton Thunder, a Class AA minor-league baseball team. The stadium is located near the banks of the Delaware River, providing visitors with a scenic view and a unique baseball atmosphere. However, the river also provides a breeding ground for many bees and other flying insects. Last summer, the park became infested with yellow jackets, stinging fans and maintenance personnel on a daily basis. According to park officials, something had to be done—and quickly.

Richard Cooper, vice president of technical services for Cooper Pest Control Inc.,



Richard Cooper, vice president of technical services for Cooper Pest Control, left, and Pete Comis, a sales representative for Van Waters & Rogers, strategically place a trap at Waterfront Park.

Lawrenceville, N.J., knows first-hand the extent of the park's yellow jacket problem.

"Fans were even leaving games early due to the threat of getting stung," Cooper says. "The stadium could be closed, and still there were 50 to 75 yellow jackets buzzing around you. Their numbers increased considerably when fans purchased snacks and beverages. It was a nightmare."

Cooper Pest Control Inc. specializes in pest control alternatives and has been in the industry for more than 40 years. At the time, the company was providing the park with other insect and rodent control services when officials approached Cooper for possible solutions. It was important that non-poisonous, environmentally conscious products be employed in this situation, due to possible human and food contact. Cooper offered a solution—Victor Yellow Jacket and Flying Insect Traps.

Three-Phase Program

Cooper's initial control program included placing 108 traps in strategic locations around the stadium, using beer as the attractant. They

were placed on all garbage cans, along walls outlining concession areas and other areas where space would permit. Many PCOs have found beer to be one of the most effective baits, but after two days of trapping, only 50 yellow jackets were caught, which was not nearly enough to stem the yellow jacket infestation.

Cooper then evaluated the existing program to determine its flaws. He discovered that placing pure beer in shady areas wasn't attracting this particular yellow jacket population. As a result, he increased the number of traps to 140, replaced beer with Italian water ice concentrate (diluted 1:1 with water) and repositioned all traps into direct sunlight.

Cooper also modified trap positioning by placing 10 traps in two specific 15-square-foot, high-density locations in an effort to intercept pre-existing foraging patterns. According to Cooper, detecting these patterns are crucial to a successful yellow jacket control program. Within 12 hours, 5,000 yellow jackets were caught.

"The yellow jackets were attracted to water ice more than any other product in the park," Cooper states. "This is an example of how impor-

tant it is to thoroughly evaluate each yellow jacket population individually and adjust baiting and control programs accordingly."

Unfortunately, another problem developed. The yellow jackets were consuming the sugary concentrate literally overnight without any harmful effects, with some even escaping as they found their way to the top of the traps. When using beer alone as an attractant, yellow jackets die rapidly in the traps. Coopers says he believes this is because of the combination of fermentation and heat from the sun depleting oxygen levels. This critical element was missing from the current control method.

Three days into the program, Cooper switched baits again. He employed his own concoction of "yellow jacket brew," using 60 percent water ice concentrate/water mixture and 40 percent beer, hoping it would not only contain the yellow jackets, but also slow bait consumption. After two days of evaluation, it was estimated that 90 percent of the yellow jackets were consistently detained using this method, but the threat of escape still existed. To compensate, Cooper applied a thin film

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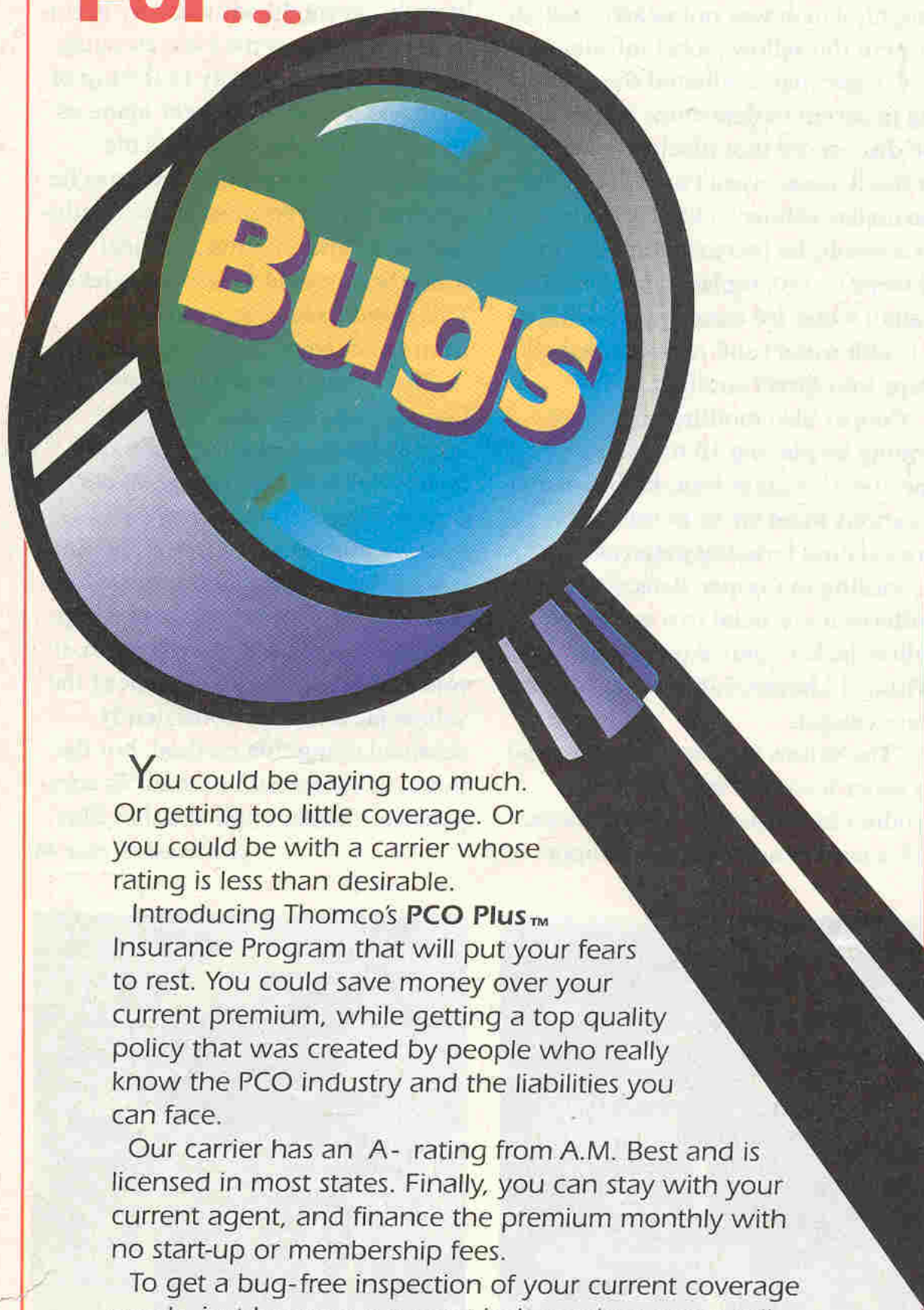


Several non-poisonous traps were placed along walls outlining concession areas, a prime location since yellow jackets are highly attracted to refreshments and snacks, including beer.



The Victor Yellow Jacket and Flying Insect Trap may be personalized to promote services provided by local pest control companies.

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of Vaseline to the inside neck of the traps, making it impossible for the yellow jackets to escape. The program was now complete.

Evaluating Positive Results

It took just five days for Cooper to alleviate the majority of the yellow jacket population. Throughout the summer, approximately 70,000 yellow jackets were trapped and eliminated, providing a safe environment for Trenton Thunder fans as well as park personnel. In fact, community service workers who perform janitorial services for the park today regularly commend Cooper and his staff for their success. Although the Trenton Thunder didn't win an Eastern League Championship last year, 1996 is proving successful once again for Cooper's pest control team.

Cooper Pest Control receives free advertising in return for its services, including video clips on the stadium's big-screen TV, 30-second radio spots on Trenton's local radio station and announcements during games thanking Cooper for its pest control efforts. Cooper says the company has benefited greatly from recent publicity.

"Our accomplishments at Waterfront Park have further cemented our position as a prominent pest control company in the region," Cooper says. "Referral business and community support has blossomed."

Cooper continues to inspect the grounds surrounding Waterfront Park for possible nest sites. He says the nests are probably inaccessible with standard yellow jacket control methods.

"The stadium was built near a river," he explains. "It is possible that hundreds of yellow jacket nests are imbedded in the riverbanks, on both sides."

According to Cooper, the Victor trap continues to be used today as an ongoing maintenance tool, along with other insect and rodent control methods. **PC**

Mike Goldstein is sales manager of professional pest control products for Woodstream, Lititz, Pa.