

Reading a pest control listing

What sits behind the customer count?

2027 edition 11-minute read

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A practical guide with a listing evidence map

Images are illustrative.

The whole guide on one page

A customer total is a starting question. Find out what was earned, what work remains and who can deliver it before making a price assumption.

The question	What good looks like	Ask for
1. Which customers have current terms?	Income traced to the agreement in force	Signed terms and invoices by service
2. Does the route work on the ground?	Access, travel and reporting time included	Dated route and visit records
3. Who covers the work?	Named cover for each actual activity	Rota, competence evidence and owner tasks
4. What do the credentials cover?	People and company claims checked separately	Certificates and issuer confirmation
5. What has been paid for but not done?	Receipts matched to service periods	Prepayment and remaining-visit schedules
6. Which profit is being advertised?	Adjustments tied to costs and duties	Accounts and a profit bridge

The public example shows why a small-team description still needs a dated measure. The listing evidence map gives you space for your own requests and findings.

Register your buying criteria

Bring the questions from your evidence map to a free first conversation.

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Register as a buyer

Meet Ternmead Pest Control

Ternmead Pest Control is invented. Its figures illustrate how to read a listing, not the price or performance of a real business.

A short listing to investigate

Illustrative example, not a real deal

An English pest-control firm with £800,000 annual income, food-premises and other commercial servicing, domestic call-outs and seasonal insect work. Reported operating profit is £120,000. Four technicians deliver the work, with the owner handling administration, customer reviews and scheduling.

Ternmead's £800,000 annual income

Illustrative



The four income streams total £800,000. Ask which invoices have current signed terms.

The listing gives no customer count. Leave it unknown. Request a dated customer and site schedule, with the income period and the definition of an active account.

The service schedule behind this example records £440,000 of historical income under current signed terms. The remainder includes repeat custom and one-off work. Ask for future service commitments separately.

The chapters turn each phrase into a document request. Read the listing once for what it says, then again for what you would need to check.

1. Which customers have current terms?

An old account record, a site and a paying customer can describe different things. Ask what the listing counts before comparing two totals.

What good looks like

Reconcile each income category to invoices, then identify the terms covering that work. Keep repeat custom separate from signed commitments.

Ternmead's servicing income

Illustrative example, not a real deal

Food-premises servicing brings in £300,000 under current signed terms. Other commercial servicing brings in £220,000, but only £140,000 has that evidence. The remaining £80,000 is repeat custom.

Listing phrase

Evidence to request

Established customer book

Dated active-account definition and site list

Commercial contracts

Signed scope, service period and actual invoices

Repeat customers

Repeat invoices shown separately from current terms

The seller's side

Long relationships are worth explaining. Show their history alongside the current documents so the buyer can see which part rests on past custom.

What to check

- ☐ Trace a food-premises agreement through report, action, invoice and receipt.
- ☐ Ask the solicitor what the actual terms mean for the proposed transaction.

FSA MyHACCP guidance says contracted services should meet the food business's requirements [1]. Start with the customer's agreed scope, not a standard visit count.

2. Does the route work on the ground?

A cluster on a map does not tell you when sites allow access. Put travel, service time and follow-up into the same dated schedule.

What good looks like

Trace a planned route to completed visits and reports. Explain gaps with the actual access arrangements and outstanding work.

Ternmead's planning week

Illustrative example, not a real deal

Four technicians have 40 planned hours each. The 160 hours comprise 100 on site, 35 travelling, 15 reporting or following up and 10 in training or other administration.

Route evidence

Question it answers

Site access instructions

When can this visit actually happen?

Planned and completed visit times

What changed during the day?

Report and follow-up record

What work remained after leaving?

The seller's side

Local knowledge can explain awkward access or a long journey. Put that explanation against a dated visit rather than leaving it in the owner's head.

What to check

- ☐ Sample commercial servicing alongside a domestic call-out and a seasonal job.
- ☐ Ask a competent practitioner to review the relevant site and follow-up records.

HSE describes integrated pest management within its rodenticide guidance [2]. Use that wider view when checking what a visit involved, rather than treating arrival at the site as the whole service.

3. Who covers the work?

Ask who can perform each actual service when the owner or a technician is absent. A headcount cannot answer that question on its own.

What good looks like

Match the rota to named people, relevant competence evidence and an escalation contact. Include the owner's work in the cover plan.

Ternmead's owner duties

Illustrative example, not a real deal

The owner's chosen 40-hour week includes 20 hours of administration and finance, 12 of customer review and quoting, and eight of scheduling and escalations. The technician schedule is separate.

Responsibility	Ask for
Planned commercial visits	Rota, relevant competence evidence and absence cover
Customer reviews	Open actions, named decision maker and handover
Scheduling and escalations	Owner task record and proposed substitute

The seller's side

The owner may be willing to help with a handover. Write down the tasks, availability and limits so both sides can assess the cover still needed.

What to check

- ☐ Keep technician availability separate from evidence of competence for an activity.
- ☐ Ask who reviews unresolved site findings when the usual person is away.

HSE's stewardship framework includes training, certification and point-of-sale competence verification [2]. Inspect the relevant evidence for the people doing the work, rather than reading capability into a staff total.

4. What do the credentials cover?

A listing may mention training, membership and approvals together. Separate the person, the company and the actual products before relying on those claims.

What good looks like

For professional-use rodenticide purchases, check the approved training evidence and its date against CRRU's detailed criteria [3].

Ternmead's evidence gap

Illustrative example, not a real deal

The listing names four technicians but supplies no certificate holders or dates. Ask for the documents; do not fill that gap by assuming all four cover every activity.

Claim in a listing

Separate evidence request

Trained team	Person, certificate, date and applicable CPD
Company membership	Company record and issuer's written sale-continuity response
Products used	Practitioner review of actual authorisations and labels

From January 2026, CRRU accepts approved certification within the previous five years, or older approved certification plus current approved CPD membership. First-time CPD entrants must complete the current year's membership criteria to be ready for the next year [3].

The seller's side

Provide the documents behind each advertised credential. Ask each issuer to answer the ownership-change question for its own scheme.

What to check

- ☐ Check the certificate's age at the date it will be relied on.
- ☐ Keep company membership and an individual's qualification on separate lines.

5. What has been paid for but not done?

Annual fees can arrive before all the visits they cover. Ask what service remains alongside the invoice and bank receipt.

What good looks like

Match receipts to the service period and remaining work. FRS 102 separates accrual accounting from cash-flow information [4].

Ternmead's future visits

Illustrative example, not a real deal

Customer prepayments of £25,000 comprise £15,000 for future food-premises servicing and £10,000 for other commercial visits. The example treats them as unearned at its snapshot.

Balance or claim

Ask for

Annual fees collected

Invoice, receipt, service period and visit schedule

£80,000 invoiced receivables

Aged invoice list and subsequent receipts

Visits still owed

Agreed scope, delivery record and unresolved actions

The seller's side

Advance receipts can be explained clearly. Put the work still owed next to the cash already received so the buyer can plan delivery.

What to check

- ☐ Ask the accountant to reconcile the prepayment schedule to the accounts.
- ☐ Ask the transaction advisers how the agreed completion definitions treat it.

Do not add the £25,000 to Ternmead's £800,000 annual income. It is a separate snapshot liability in this example, not another stream of earned income or the cost of delivering the visits.

6. Which profit is being advertised?

Put the listing's profit label next to the accounts. Then ask which costs disappear and which duties need a replacement.

What good looks like

Every adjustment has an amount, a source document and a reason. Reconcile the schedule back to reported profit before discussing value.

Ternmead's profit bridge

Illustrative example, not a real deal

£800,000 income less £680,000 operating costs leaves £120,000 reported operating profit. The costs include the owner's £50,000 employment cost and a chosen isolated expense of £10,000.

Profit bridge	Amount
Reported operating profit	£120,000
Remove isolated expense	+ £10,000
Remove owner employment cost	+ £50,000
Deduct replacement employment cost	– £65,000
Illustrative adjusted profit	£115,000

The seller's side

Explain the adjustment and show its evidence. If the owner's tasks continue, include the chosen replacement cost rather than removing the role with the pay.

What to check

- ☐ Match each adjustment to invoices and the responsibilities that remain.
- ☐ Keep business value, contractual price, working capital and seller cash separate.

FRS 102's accrual principle helps explain why profit is not simply bank receipts less payments [4]. Ask the accountant to check the accounting basis and the proposed adjustments separately.

What a real small-team example tells you

An acquirer's announcement describes a West Sussex family pest-control business whose owners had decided to retire. It said one owner would remain as a technician consultant during the transition [5].

The target's filed accounts record an average of **five persons employed during the year ended June 2021** [6]. This establishes small-team context, not a technician count, full-time equivalents, acquisition-day staffing or comparable financial performance.

Public evidence	What it establishes	What to ask about your target
Acquisition announcement	Stated succession and transition plan	Which owner tasks are included in the handover?
Annual accounts	Dated average-employment measure	What staffing measure does this listing use?
Your target's current records	Evidence still to obtain	Who is available for the services being sold?

Ask for the dated roster, responsibilities and written handover terms. Keep each measure beside its period so that a historical average does not become today's available cover.

Use the source notes to identify the target and acquirer. Then compare the questions with the documents supplied for your own proposed purchase.

Pest control listing evidence map

Use this sheet with any pest-control listing. Enter its reference and date. For each headline, record what it might mean, the evidence received and the next request. Leave unknowns visible.

Listing reference and date

Headline	Possible meaning	Evidence and finding	Next request / reviewer
Customer book			
Service area			
Team and owner cover			
Credentials			
Annual billing			
Profit figure			

Decision: investigate further, pause or stop. Record the reason, action owner and review date.

Choose whether to investigate further, pause or stop after reviewing the evidence. This sheet has no pass mark. Put technical questions to a competent practitioner and document questions to the relevant adviser.

Type your answers in and save a copy, or print the page and fill it in by hand. Nothing you enter is sent to us.

Sources and validity

1. Food Standards Agency, MyHACCP: General requirements to be considered for each prerequisite, undated. Contract services and Pest Control sections. Guidance on the food business's requirements, not a statutory contractor duty or universal visit frequency.
2. Health and Safety Executive: Rodenticides, updated Jun 2025. Integrated pest management and UK professional anticoagulant stewardship. The regulatory framework distinguishes GB BPR in England, Scotland and Wales from EU BPR in Northern Ireland. Product authorisations and restrictions require individual checks.
3. Campaign for Responsible Rodenticide Use UK: Training and Certification, undated. Detailed requirements and FAQs applying from January 2026. UK point-of-sale competence evidence for professional-use rodenticides; older certification requires current approved CPD as well. Existing requirements, not a new 2027 deadline.
4. Financial Reporting Council: FRS 102, September 2024 edition, paragraph 2.48 and accrual-basis glossary. Principle for applicable FRS 102 accounts, not a prescribed transaction adjustment or completion definition.
5. Cleankill Pest Control: Cleankill increases foothold in West Sussex, undated announcement. Acquisition of Des Bone Ltd, owners Ann and Richard Bone retiring, and stated consultant transition. Exact completion date, price and handover outcome are not established.
6. Des Bone Ltd: Accounts for the year ended June 2021, note 4, PDF page 8. Filed March 2022, approved December 2021. Average five persons employed during that year; no inference about technicians, acquisition-day staff or financial comparability.

Checked Oct 2026. We review every guide after the Autumn Budget in October 2026. Accounting, legal and technical conclusions depend on the actual records and transaction. Ask your advisers to check yours.

The example. Ternmead Pest Control is invented, not a Reads client or a real sale. Its figures and schedules are chosen teaching assumptions, not market benchmarks. Images are illustrative. Requests for records are practical checks, not claims that every record has a universal legal duty or retention period.

Start with the evidence you need



Clarify the services, geography and cover you are looking for. Bring the unanswered questions from your listing evidence map to a free first conversation.

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