It is much safer and more economical to try to keep pests out rather than eliminate them after they become established. Like the vigilant keeper of the gate in the image above, food plants, museums, restaurants, grocery stores, households, or any other pest protected areas receiving inbound stored products need to stop unwanted visitors and enemies from entering.

THE GATEKEEPER APPROACH to pest control helps create a pest prevention program. The new FDA FSMA (Food Safety Modernization Act) program specifies prevention as a mandated requirement in food processing facilities. A pest prevention program makes more sense than a pest control program. We work hard to eliminate a pest problem that could have been stopped at the door if someone had been trained and empowered to check each product entering the facility. A few examples of routes of entry that pests can take are; railcars of raw ingredients at a cereal processing plant, a new museum object of unknown origin, a pallet of potatoes at a super grocery store (open 24 hours a day, seven days a week), a sack of fresh produce to a restaurant, or a box of used clothing in a house. One fertile female cockroach, moth or flour beetle may begin reproducing fast enough to start a serious outbreak in just a few short months.

Gatekeepers need to be given the proper tools and be trained to inspect for signs of pest infestation as well as for the small intruders themselves. If a facility receives products or ingredients during three shifts, at least three Gatekeepers are required. The Gatekeeper should command respect by their appearance, skill, and attentiveness and they should have the authority to stop infested material from entering the facility.

Inspecting for rodent evidence is an art. The Gatekeeper should visually inspect for gnawing and should use a blacklight to inspect for urine and fecal pellets. Care should be taken because while rodent urine will fluoresce under a blacklight, many inks and glues will also fluoresce when inspected with the same light. To become familiar with the appearance and color of rodent urine, obtain a mouse from the pet store and place it on pieces of packaging material for a day or more. The urine stained paper can be inspected with the blacklight and retained for future comparisons.

To inspect for insects, a pheromone trap can be placed in food processing areas and storage warehouses where inbound ingredients arrive. They should be inspected...
weekly. Take care to replace the pheromone lure every 60-90 days. Placing the pheromone traps where new inbound ingredients are held will help pinpoint incoming insects in 24 hours or less. Rodents can also be detected on inbound pallets by placing a strip of glue traps around the perimeter of the pallets. Mice will cross this sticky strip and get permanently stuck. This information will help the Gatekeeper make decisions on how to handle the shipment.

Below is a Dirty Dozen Poster to help the Gatekeeper identify the bad bugs that they need to keep out.