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**Front Cover:** virtual conferences became the norm in 2020. The biggest meeting across the region was FAOPMA-Pest Summit 2020, see full report Pages 4-15.

## Let’s Forget 2020???

**2020, what a horrible year. This has been a period that none of us will forget for the rest of our lives. The COVID-19 pandemic** completely changed our existence with a year marked by: movement control orders and lock downs; physical isolation from friends, family and colleagues; business closures and an economic recession; and most travel beyond the immediate vicinity was halted. But the greatest terror of all has been the fear of one’s own mortality. By the end of 2020, there were a reported 84 million cases and, tragically, some 1.8 million deaths. Not surprisingly, this issue of the FAOPMA Magazine feature a number of COVID-19 related articles.

You may well ask, who could have predicted the COVID-19 pandemic?

To consider this question, we only have to look at history. During my life time, there have been the emergence of numerous diseases, including; Lyme, Ebola, Nipah, SARS, Lyssavirus, Ehrlichia, HIV, Hepatitis C & E, Babesia, Hendra virus, H1N1, MERS, VRE, and MRSA, just to name a few. Plus we have seen the spread of known pathogens to new parts of the world, including; West Nile, Zika, and Chikungunya viruses. Furthermore, vector-borne disease such as dengue and tick-borne encephalitis are on the increase.

Perhaps the question should be; *how could have we not seen this coming???* We must look to the past in order to predict the future, and to prevent the worst of history repeating itself. *Thus we can never forget 2020!!!*

Yet in spite of the pandemic and a lack of planning for the inevitable, there have been a number of heroes in the battle against this virus. Obviously front line medical staff have done a tremendous job to save lives. Yet there is another group of unsung heroes, whose efforts have largely gone unnoticed. A group that very rapidly responded to the situation, namely pest control operators. In spite of the huge risks to themselves, this industry has been at the forefront of battling the worst contagion seen for over 100 years. Yet COVID-19 infections in pest managers have been remarkably rare and this has been a great testament to themselves and their employers. You should all be very proud of your achievements in protecting the community and saving lives. We thank you all. ■

*Stephen Doggett* (Chief Editor)