

Pest Control: Cockroaches

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Cockroaches are pests throughout the United States. They carry filth on their legs and bodies and may spread disease by polluting food. They destroy food and damage fabrics and bookbindings. Cockroaches have an offensive odor that may ruin food. Unless dishes over which the insects run are thoroughly washed, they may give off the odor when warmed. There are about 55 kinds of cockroaches in the United States, but only seven kinds are troublesome in buildings. Most of the others live outdoors. They may enter houses by coming in on firewood or by flying to lights, but most of them cannot develop indoors. They either leave or die.

Description: Cockroaches have a broad, flattened shape, and six long legs. They are dark brown, reddish brown, light brown, or black. The adults of most species have wings. The young look like the adults, except that they are smaller and do not have wings. Cockroaches hide during the day in sheltered, dark places. They come out and forage at night. If disturbed, they run rapidly for shelter and disappear through openings to their hiding places. The seven kinds that are troublesome in buildings can be distinguished from each other by their appearance and by the places where they are found. The table and illustrations will help you learn to distinguish them.

Development: German and brown-banded cockroaches mature in 2 to 5 months; other

kinds mature in about a year. Cockroaches grow slowly when food, temperature, and moisture are unfavorable. Conditions are not usually ideal for rapid growth in buildings and homes where good sanitation is practiced. The female lays her eggs in a leathery capsule, which she forms at the end of her body. The German cockroach carries the egg capsule about a month, and drops it just before the eggs hatch; about 36 cockroaches hatch from the capsule. The other kinds carry the egg capsules a day or two, then glue them to some object in a protected place; about 12 cockroaches hatch from each capsule after an incubation period of 1 to 3 months.

Preventing Entry: Cockroaches may enter the house from outdoors from other buildings, or from adjoining homes or apartments. To keep them out, fill all cracks passing through floors or walls, and cracks leading to spaces behind baseboards and door frames, with putty or plastic wood. Pay special attention to water and steam pipes entering rooms. Cockroaches develop in large numbers in dirt and filth. Thorough cleaning reduces the likelihood of them spreading. When you bring baskets, bags, beverage cartons, or boxes of food and laundry in the house, look for cockroaches that may be hiding in them, and kill any that you find.

Places to Treat: For best results, apply insecticides to

places where cockroaches hide. To find the hiding places, enter a dark room quietly, turn on the lights, and watch where the cockroaches run. They may hide:

1. **Around the kitchen** sink and drainboard.
2. **In cracks** around or underneath cupboards and cabinets, or inside them—especially in upper corners.
3. **Around pipes** or conduits where they pass along the wall or go through it.
4. **Inside the motor compartment** of mechanical refrigerators.
5. **Behind the window** or door frames
6. **Behind loose baseboards** or molding strips
7. **In radio** and television cabinets
8. **Behind mirrors**

When treating cupboards and pantries, take everything from shelves and remove drawers so that food and utensils will not become contaminated. Spray or dust the interiors. Allow the spray to dry, or clean up excess powder. Clean shelf surfaces, or cover them with paper, before replacing the articles. If drawers are cleaned thoroughly, it is not necessary to spray inside them; it will help to spray the sides, backs, and undersurfaces.

Resistance of Cockroaches to Insecticides: In areas where the German cockroach has developed resistance to some insecticides, poor control of

affected infestations may become evident. German cockroaches can be controlled, however, with the proper use of approved insecticides. Frequently, poor control of cockroach infestation is due to improper use of insecticides and lack of good sanitation practice in infested environments.

Other Methods of Control

Baits: Registered baits containing approved materials may be used in cockroach control programs. Buy these baits and place them in areas frequented by cockroaches. Do not use them where they can be reached by children or pets.

Contact Sprays or Space Sprays: Contact sprays or space sprays must be applied directly to cockroaches or to open areas where cockroaches are crawling. Spray into cracks, crevices, and other hard-to-reach areas where cockroaches may hide.

Fumigation: Fumigation immediately destroys a cockroach infestation, but it is dangerous in congested or commercial areas, and it is expensive. Buildings in such areas are likely to become reinfested within a short time. Since effective residual insecticides have become available, fumigation is seldom used. Only a professional pest-control operator should fumigate.

Boric Acid and Borax: Finely powdered boric acid and borax (sodium tetraborate pentahydrate) act slowly and are

generally less effective than other insecticides against cockroaches. These materials are sometimes mixed with ingredients that are attractive to cockroaches and compressed into tablets to be used as bait. The powders or bait tablets may give satisfactory results when used in places where there is little food for cockroaches, such as in office buildings.

Precautions: Pesticides are safe and effective when used as directed. Used improperly they can be injurious to man, animals, and plants. The user is cautioned to read and follow all directions and precautions on the label of the pesticide formulation being used. The amount and frequency of pesticide use may vary in different sections of the country.

Keep store pesticides in original containers under lock and key – out of the reach of children and animals – and away from food and feed. Apply pesticides so that they do not endanger humans, livestock, crops, beneficial insects, fish, and wildlife.

Do not apply pesticides where there is danger of drift, when honey bees or other pollinating insects are visiting plants, or in ways that may contaminate water or leave illegal residues. Avoid prolonged inhalation of pesticide sprays or dusts; wear protective clothing and equipment if specified on the container. If your hands become contaminated with a pesticide, do not eat or drink until you have washed. In case a pesticide is swallowed or gets in the eyes, follow the first-aid

treatment given on the label, and get prompt medical attention. If a pesticide is applied on your skin or clothing, remove clothing immediately and wash skin thoroughly.

Editors Note: To attend a seminar on Pest Mgmt., please log onto www.nyarm.com/NYARM_seminar.pdf and FAX registration form to **(212) 216-0680**