

HOME GROUNDS FACT SHEET

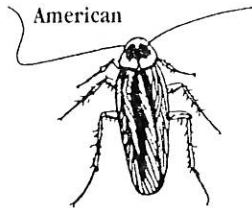


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Cockroaches



Cockroaches are household pests throughout the United States. Although they are traditionally associated with dirty dwellings, they can be found even in the "best of homes." Cockroaches are one of the oldest insects - there are fossil remains of them dating back 200,000,000 years. They have survived such a long time because they have demonstrated outstanding ability to adapt to a wide range of habitats.

Cockroaches feed on a variety of foods, with a preference for starchy and sugary material. Cockroaches will sip milk, soda or beer left out or in unrinsed bottles, nibble cheese, feed on meats, pastry, grain products, sugar - practically all the foods we eat. They will also feed freely on book bindings, sizing, innerlinings of soles and dead insects. They carry debris on their legs and bodies, and may spread germs and contaminate food. Cockroaches also give off an offensive odor that may ruin food or persist on dishes or other items they run over.

There are four types of house-infesting roaches commonly seen in New York State.

American Cockroach, *Periplaneta americana*

Description: reddish brown to dark brown; adults 1 1/2-2 inches long.

Where found: in damp basements and sewers; forage mostly on first floors of buildings.

Brown-banded Cockroach, *Supella longipalpa* (also called tropical cockroach)

Description: light brown; mottled, reddish brown wings on female; lighter wings on male. Adults 1/2 inch long.

Where found: all over the building.

German Cockroach, *Blattella germanica* (also called croton bug and water bug)

Description: light brown, black stripes running lengthwise on back. Adults 5/8 inch long. Most common of the 4 kinds.

Where found: all over the building, particularly in kitchens and bathrooms.

Oriental Cockroach, *Blatta orientalis* (also called black beetle and shad roach)

Description: black or dark brown. Traces of wings on females; short wings on males. Female adults 1-1 1/4 inches long; male adults a little shorter. More sluggish than other 3 kinds.

Where found: in damp basements and sewers; forage mostly on first floors of buildings.

Description and habits:

Cockroaches have a broad, flattened shape and six long spiny legs. They are dark brown, reddish brown, light brown or black and the adults of most species have wings. Cockroaches undergo a gradual metamorphosis, which means that there are three steps in their development: egg - nymph - adult. The young nymphs resemble the adults, but they are smaller and do not have wings.

Cockroaches hide during the day in sheltered places. They come out to look for food at night, and if disturbed, run rapidly for shelter and disappear through openings to their hiding places. Typical hiding places for roaches are warm, dark and moist; under a sink, behind a dishwasher, stove, refrigerator or under cupboards.

Integrated Pest Management (IPM) Considerations

IPM is a common sense approach to pest control and plant care. It employs a number of measures to prevent, control or reduce problems. Always use the least toxic methods first.

A good mechanical control, in many instances, is to vacuum the insects and then throw the bag away. Regarding household pests, in addition to regular house-cleaning, the best preventive method is to monitor the home, i.e. note any cracks in foundations, air spaces between windows and frames, poorly-fitting doors, moisture from leaks, etc., and correct such examples/situations.

B-2-13A JES reviewed RT 1/03

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Building Strong and Vibrant New York Communities

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Management:

Cockroaches may enter the house from outside, in infested containers or from adjoining buildings or apartments. To keep them out, all cracks passing through walls and floors, or cracks leading to spaces behind baseboards and door frames, should be filled with putty or plastic wood. Be sure to check areas where water and steam pipes enter the building. When you bring in baskets, bags, etc., look for cockroaches that may be hiding in them and destroy any you find.

In the kitchen, keeping food in tightly sealed containers, rinsing cans and bottles before depositing them in the recycle bin and wrapping or containerizing all edible garbage waste tightly will be helpful. Transferring garbage to outdoor containers often will also reduce food sources for the roaches.

Bait traps with boric acid are considered least toxic products. Combat or Maxforce are examples. For the German cockroach, traps containing an aggregation pheromone are available. They give better results than sticky traps without the pheromone. Boric acid dust may also be applied to wall voids, which are sealed during initial construction of buildings, and it remains effective for years if it does not get wet. Entire apartment buildings may need to be treated by trained specialists. Choose those using least toxic methods. If insecticides are used, make limited applications in areas where roaches hide. To find hiding places, enter a dark room quietly, turn on the lights, and watch where roaches run.

They typically hide beneath kitchen sinks and under and behind appliances.

[Much of this information has been taken from Bulletin #74, "Pest Management Around the Home" published by Cornell University.]

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