

Cockroaches



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Many people associate the cockroach with subtropical and temperate regions of the United States, not with Alaska. This concept is changing rapidly as increasing numbers of homeowners and apartment dwellers find this pest appearing in their living areas. The cockroach has become the most common and disagreeable pest in urban areas of the United States.

The cockroach is an insect with three life stages: egg, nymph and adult. Eggs are deposited by the female in an egg case which may contain 12 or more eggs. This egg case is usually attached to some object after it is formed. This is probably the stage in which most cockroaches are transported with luggage or household goods. Nymphs are similar in appearance to the adult but smaller. They go through several molts before reaching adulthood. All cockroaches typically hide during the day and are active during the night searching for food and moisture.

There are several species of cockroaches but the German cockroach is the one most likely to be encountered in Alaskan homes. The adult is approximately ½ -inch long and light brown with a pair of longitudinal black stripes directly behind the head. Nymphs are darker and have a pale brown stripe on their back. Cockroaches are likely to be found in areas such as the kitchen and bathroom where the three basic requirements of food, warmth and moisture exist.

Prevention involves checking items coming into

the home that are likely to carry hitchhiking cockroaches or attached egg cases. Shipments of household goods, luggage, used furniture and appliances that come from areas of known or suspected cockroach activity should be checked closely. If cockroaches do gain entrance, you can discourage their activity by eliminating hiding and breeding places, including cracks and holes around plumbing fixtures and along baseboards or ceiling moldings. They prefer narrow cracks or crevices for hiding. Removing access to food is also a good preventative measure. Do not leave unwashed utensils or exposed foods overnight. Keep food storage areas clean and keep pet foods in containers with tight-fitting lids.

Chemical control may be necessary to completely eliminate a cockroach problem. Insecticides registered for use against cockroaches are available. Some products come in ready-to-use aerosol containers while others can be purchased in concentrated form. Effective use of these insecticides requires that they be applied to areas where cockroaches hide during the day or where they travel at night. The insecticides have residual activity but reapplications may be required at two to three week intervals to control the nymphs that hatched from egg cases that were not affected by previous applications. Some approved insecticides for cockroach control registered with the Environmental Protection Agency include bait, dusts, ready-to-use (RTU) sprays, wettable powders (WP),

emulsifiable concentrates (EC) aerosols, fogger formulations and insect growth regulators (IGR). Of these formulations, properly placed baits use the least amount of pesticides, offer significant cockroach control and cause minimal harm to non target organisms and the environment."

When selecting a pesticide, look for one registered for use in Alaska. Check the Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation website at www.dec.state.ak.us/eh/pest/index.htm. Look on the pesticide label's ingredient statement for one of these active ingredients: acetamiprid, boric acid, diatomaceous earth, hydramethylnon, hydroprone, imidacloprid, indoxacarb or pyriproxyfen. The following active ingredients are restricted-use pesticides and are only sold to and applied by certified pesticide applicators: abamectin, fipronil and permethrin.

Read and follow label directions before using any insecticide, and observe all safety precautions.

There are cockroach traps available that can be used to reduce resident populations. These are

most effective when combined with preventive and insecticide control measures. Traps should be placed close to walls and along pathways between hiding and feeding areas. If the trap does not catch cockroaches after two nights, change the location. Traps are easy to use, are disposable and do not contain toxic insecticides.

A homeowner can be very effective in eliminating a cockroach problem by using prevention and control measures but there may be situations where the services of a professional pest control operator are required. Before signing a contract, determine what control measures will be used, if reapplications will be necessary, what guarantee is provided, and the total costs involved. Compare all of these factors if more than one pest control operator is available. Professionals have the training and materials to do a complete and thorough job.

For additional information on cockroaches or other household pests, contact the nearest Cooperative Extension Service office. IPM technicians may also be available to assist with your pest identification and control options.

Originally written by Wayne Vandre, Extension Horticulture Specialist, in 1984. Revised by Bob Gorman, Extension Faculty, Natural Resources and Community Development, in October 2008.

For more information, contact your local Cooperative Extension Service office or Bob Gorman at ffrfg@uaf.edu or 907-786-6312.

**Visit the Cooperative Extension Service Web site at
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