



**Public Health Department**

**Environmental Health Division**

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## **Cockroach Facts and Management Strategies**

### **Cockroach Overview:**

- Cockroaches have become well adapted to living with and near humans, making them one of the hardest household pests to control.
- They are a pest and a danger to public health because they can:
  - Spread diseases and germs
  - Pollute food with droppings
  - Damage household items, such as books and clothing, by chewing
  - Leave a foul musky odor with their droppings, old skins, and dead bodies
- Cockroaches do not bite, but they have heavy leg spines that may scratch.
- Infestations are generally associated with unsanitary conditions inside or outside the residence where food, water, and/or shelter is readily available.
  - Cockroaches will eat a great variety of materials, including cheese and bakery products, but they are especially fond of starchy materials, sweet substances, and meat products.
  - They prefer to live in warm, damp areas like sewers, bathrooms, cabinets, furniture, electrical appliances, basements, porches and crawl spaces.
- Roaches are primarily nocturnal, so daytime sightings may indicate potentially heavy infestations.
  - They tend to hide in cracks and crevices and can move freely from room to room or adjoining housing units via wall spaces, plumbing and other utility installations.
  - Entry into homes is often accomplished through food and beverage boxes, grocery sacks, animal food, and household goods carried into the home.
- Once a cockroach infestation is established, it is hard to eliminate.

### **Signs of Cockroach Activity:**

- There are 55 species of cockroaches in the United States, but only six species commonly inhabit human dwellings: German cockroach, American cockroach, Australian cockroach, Oriental cockroach, brown cockroach, brown-banded cockroach, and smokey-brown cockroach.
- Live cockroaches are the most obvious sign of an infestation, but you should also look for:



- Small, leather-like egg cases
- Old skins shed by the nymphs as they grow larger
- Droppings along runways that look like coffee grounds
- Brownish stains along cracks
- Sour, musky odors
- Dead cockroaches

### Management Strategies:

#### ➤ Prevention:

- Inspect items being carried into the home and sealing cracks and crevices in kitchens, bathrooms, exterior doors, and windows.
- Structural modifications would include weather stripping and pipe collars.

#### ➤ Sanitation:

- Deny cockroaches food, water, and shelter
- Quickly clean food particles from shelving and floors; timely washing of dinnerware; routine cleaning under refrigerators, stoves, furniture, and similar areas.
- If feeding pets indoors, pet food should be stored in tight containers and not left in bowls overnight. Litter boxes should be cleaned routinely.
- Fix leaking plumbing, drains, sink traps, and aquaria.
- Purge clutter, such as papers and soiled clothing and rags.

#### ➤ Trapping:

- Cockroach traps can be used to capture roaches and serve as a monitoring device.

#### ➤ Chemical Control:

- Numerous insecticides are available and appropriate information and usage is obtainable from the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA).



**Additional Information & Resources:**

**Prevention & Control: Cockroaches: San Diego County**

<http://www.sdcounty.ca.gov/deh/pests/cockroaches.html>

**CDC Healthy Housing Reference Manual – Chapter 4: Disease Vectors & Pests**

<http://www.cdc.gov/nceh/publications/books/housing/cha04.htm>

**Los Angeles County: Effective Management of Cockroach Infestations**

[http://publichealth.lacounty.gov/eh/docs/Specialized/Vector\\_Management/cockroachMgmt.pdf](http://publichealth.lacounty.gov/eh/docs/Specialized/Vector_Management/cockroachMgmt.pdf)