

Cockroaches Advice Leaflet

Cockroaches present one of the most significant public health risks, carrying diseases such as dysentery, gastroenteritis, diarrhoea, typhoid, poliomyelitis, and salmonella. They are most commonly found in the commercial premises in which food is produced or handled, such as restaurants and catering establishments. However, they are not uncommon in domestic situations where they can live in kitchens and in drains. This advice sheet aims to provide you with information on the following:

1. A description of the cockroach
2. The preferred habitat, life cycle and causes of cockroaches
3. What can be done to prevent and treat for cockroaches?



1. A description of the cockroach

The three most common and important species of cockroach are (1) the Oriental cockroach, (2) the German cockroach, and (3) the American cockroach. The Oriental and German cockroach are more common to the UK. The Oriental cockroach reaches about 20-24 mm in length during its adulthood, is almost black in colour and largely found in cooler, less humid areas. The German cockroach is markedly smaller at 9-14 mm in size. It is a brownish yellow colour, and is a strong climber, thriving particularly well in kitchens and canteens. The American cockroach is the largest of the species, reaching between 30-35 mm in size. It is red-brown in colour and survives especially well in drains and sewers.

2. The preferred habitat, life cycle and causes of cockroaches

Cockroaches are particularly common in commercial premises where food is stored or prepared. They are nocturnal creatures, spending the daytime hiding in cracks and crevices around sources of food and water, such as cookers, sinks, drains, the back of cupboards, and in refrigerator motor components. Complex pipework systems and underground ducts in larger buildings can make the control of the species much more difficult.

The Oriental cockroach produces 5 egg capsules at monthly intervals. Each capsule contains up to 16 eggs, which are often found in areas in close vicinity to food. The eggs will hatch and mature to adulthood within 10 months to 2 years.

The German cockroach, produces between 4-8 egg capsules, at approximately 1 month intervals. Each capsule contains up to 30 eggs. These capsules are normally concealed near a food source. Hatching and maturity normally occurs within 3-4 months, and adults can live between 8-9 months. However, this depends heavily on temperature.

3. What can be done to prevent and treat for cockroaches?

Successful control of cockroaches is a complex subject, and depends heavily on tailoring control measures to the species concerned.

Assessment of the species type, and the location of infestation is vitally important. This process is best carried out at night, due to their nocturnal nature.

Good hygiene management is essential. This will deny any sources of food or hiding places.

Insecticidal control is also required. However, the effectiveness of this depends on the suitability of the insecticide and the thorough application of the product. Many insects and egg cases are well hidden, therefore the insecticide must be accurately placed at and around these harbourages and well maintained over the gestation and maturation period of the particular species.