

There are about 3,500 different species of cockroach in the world, of which the vast majority are tropical. The cockroaches found indoors in the United Kingdom have been introduced from the tropics during the last 200 years, and most of them can only survive in heated buildings.

Life Cycle

The German Cockroach - This is by far the commonest species. Both sexes have well developed wings which cover the whole of their body, but these are not used for active flying, but for gliding when they jump, for instance, from the table to the floor. The female of the species produces 4-8 egg capsules at approximately 1 month intervals. Each thick walled brown capsule is about 6mm long and divided into 30-40 small compartments, each containing a single egg. In the German cockroach, the female carries the egg capsule behind her until the small, wingless young are ready to hatch out some 2-4 weeks later. Efforts are made to conceal the capsules near a food source, where the nymphs will hatch and pass through 5-7 moults before reaching maturity. At room temperature they are fully grown in about 4 months and the adults will have a life span of about 9 months.



The Oriental Cockroach - The female produces 5 egg capsules at monthly intervals. The thick walled resistant capsules, 12mm in length, each contain up to 16 eggs and are deposited by the female in a dark sheltered place. After about 2 months it splits open and the small nymphs crawl out. These nymphs go through about 7-10 moults before reaching maturity, a process which takes about 10 months to 2 years depending upon temperature and food supply. With each successive moult, the wings and feelers develop and the nymph becomes progressively more like the adult, which will live approximately 6 months. The wings of the adults cover about $\frac{3}{4}$ of the body.



Habits

Cockroaches are not fussy about what they eat and are often found in groups. Scent produced by their faeces and during mating serve to attract isolated companions. They spend much of the day hiding in cracks and crevices around such areas as sinks, drains, cookers, the backs of cupboards and in refrigerator motor compartments. They especially favour buildings with service ducts and complex plumbing installations. Infestations may be introduced as egg cases or adults in incoming laundry, on raw materials, in crates and packaging, or arise as the insects enter buildings via such routes as drains or refuse chutes.

Cockroaches are potential carriers of diseases such as dysentery, gastro-enteritis and typhoid. Their diet is very varied and can include soiled dressings, hair, leather, wallpaper and faeces. Germs from these materials can be transferred to food for human consumption either on the body of the cockroach or within the droppings it leaves behind.

In addition, food may be tainted with the characteristic smell of the cockroach, which is produced by its droppings and secretions.

Control

As with most indoor insects, good hygiene standards will go a long way towards eliminating the trouble. It not only denies the insects a source of food but will also make their discovery a lot easier.

All cracks, crevices and other building defects which could provide a dark enclosure for cockroaches should be filled in and/or repaired. Pipe work if possible should not be boxed in as that provides an excellent hiding place. If the infestation is in adjoining properties, cockroaches may well be in cracks and other conduits that connect the two, in which case any remedial treatment must be applied to both properties.

Treatment

Treatment is generally by the application of insecticidal gels or sprays. However, the effectiveness of this depends on the suitability of the insecticide and the thorough application of the product. Cockroaches can be difficult to control and are best treated professionally. Treatment will generally involve the initial application of a gel or spray and follow up treatments may also be required to ensure that any newly hatched nymphs are also treated.

Harrow Council offers an affordable, chargeable service for domestic and commercial premises for cockroaches and the preferred treatment is gel baits. Please visit our website or telephone us for further information on pricing. It is likely that adjoining properties may also need treatment and the Pest Control officers will ensure this work is carried out also.

Advice on the identification and control of all household pests is provided free of charge and is available by phone, email or via our website.

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