

Cockroaches

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Of the 3500 cockroach species known throughout the world, less than 1% are pest species. About 450 species are native to Australia, with very few inclined to enter our houses.

Cockroaches are considered pests because of the possibility of disease transmission due to their lifestyle. They may commonly dwell in sewers or other sources of contamination then walk across food, food preparation areas, utensils etc.

In summer, along with the pest cockroaches we may also find the large brown to black 'smoky brown cockroach' or the large brown with yellow border 'Australian cockroach' in our homes. These are 'outside' cockroaches and the ones we find have flown into the house. Control should be restricted to the individual, and restricting access into our homes where possible.

Habits

To control cockroaches that invade our homes we need to consider their basic habits:

1. They are omnivorous; ie they will eat anything.
2. They are generally nocturnal, becoming active soon after dark.
3. During daylight hours they rest in tight cracks and crevices such as behind skirting boards, where shelving joins or attaches to the wall, where pipes go through the cabinets into the wall etc.
4. They have a tendency to congregate together.

How to Determine the Extent of the Infestation

Inspect at night or use an aerosol insecticide such as fly spray along the cracks and crevices of your kitchen as a flushing agent. If cockroaches are being seen during the day, it usually indicates a serious infestation.

Control of Cockroaches

Attempting to control cockroaches using only chemicals is doomed to fail. The removal of resting areas and food sources is also necessary to gain control.

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Non-Chemical Controls

1. Fill in all cracks and crevices where possible using silicon sealant, thereby eliminating harbourage areas.
2. Do not leave dishes unwashed or pet feeding bowls dirty.
3. Store all food in air tight containers.
4. Remove kitchen waste daily to an external bin.

Chemical Controls

There are many pesticides registered for cockroach control. However, it is advisable to ask your pest control operator to use one of the lower toxicity available, such as a *synthetic pyrethoid* (SP). Common SPs are *deltamethrin*, *permethrin* and *tetramethrin*. These are now effective baits available for use by pesticide operators.

If you wish to treat your house yourself, the following low toxicity methods are available:

1. Space sprays

Eg: 'cockroach bombs' For greater effectiveness use one which contains both *permethrin* and *hydroprene* (or other growth regulator). The growth regulator stops the eggs developing into reproductive adults.

2. Crack & crevice powder

Usually *permethrin* powder. Use in any cracks and crevices which may harbour the cockroaches.

3. Surface Spray

The low irritant formulations usually contain *permethrin*, *tetramethrin* etc Use underneath and behind large kitchen appliances such as the refrigerator, microwave oven and oven etc.

4. Baits

Best used in conjunction with other control methods.

When using any pesticide, read, understand and take heed of all directions on the label.

General safety measures when pesticides are used

- (a) Remove food or keep in air tight containers.
- (b) Remove or cover crockery, kitchen utensils etc then wash prior to use.
- (c) Do not allow anyone else in the area whilst using pesticides.
- (d) Ensure that your house is thoroughly aired prior to re-occupation (approximately two hours with all windows open).

For further information contact the Health Department's Pest Control Unit on 9383 4244.