

FACT SHEET

Cockroaches

This Information Sheet is to help inform on cockroaches and ways you can help eliminate and control outbreaks on your property.

Cockroaches have been pests in man's dwellings for centuries and are always difficult to eradicate largely because of their secretive habits, as they are active and feed mainly at night.

Habitat

Cockroaches may be found wherever there is a supply of food, water and warmth e.g. in kitchens. They hide during the day in cracks and crevices or dark places such as drains or sewers. You find them in cupboards behind skirting boards, sinks, stoves and refrigerators; their flat bodies enabling them to hide in the smallest cracks when disturbed.

The Need for Control

Cockroaches eat almost anything including books and soft cloth but they really prefer cereals, sugary foods and meat products.

They leave a nasty smell that is most persistent and is passed on to any food or cooking utensils they touch. Even greater reason for concern is that cockroaches carry disease organisms particularly those causing food poisoning. Crawling about in murky places they pick up dirt and bacteria which can then be spread on to clean table tops, the bread board, sugar bowl, food cupboards, shelves and cooking utensils.

Life Cycle

The life cycle of cockroaches takes about 9-12 months to complete. Eggs are laid in strong pod-like capsules that may be deposited, or carried by the female until close to hatching time, depending on the species. The eggs, usually about 30, hatch after about a month in the capsule and the baby cockroaches called nymphs reach adult size roughly 2 months later. Six or more egg capsules may be laid during the lifetime of a single female thus a well-provisioned cockroach population can multiply rapidly.

Control

1. Sanitation

- 1.1. A cockroach is attracted to the smallest crumb, thus kitchens, especially sinks, stoves, food cupboards and drawers should be kept scrupulously free of food particles or accumulated grease;
- 1.2. Never leave washing up for the morning;
- 1.3. Organise and regularly inspect all kitchen cupboards and storage areas especially if little used;

- 1.4. Never allow old newspapers; magazines and cartons to accumulate;
- 1.5. Holes, cracks and crevices which offer harbourage should be filled and sealed where practicable; and,
- 1.6. Rubbish bins should be fitted with tight lids and kept clean.

2. Insect Sprays

If a home is already infected then good housekeeping, to remove cockroach food and water supplies, will need to be backed up with insecticide applications.

Insecticides recommended to control cockroaches are:

- Baygon Surface spray
- Baygon 20 (Residual)
- Bayer Tugon
- Coopex
- David Grey Roach Dust

There are many other useful insecticides available from local retailers, however low toxic residual surface sprays and pyrethroid knockdown aerosols are recommended.

Spray Cockroach Resting Places, Feeding Areas and Connecting Routes

When applying insecticides remember these points:

- Use a residual spray rather than a dust in food areas.
- Remove all food and food utensils or pile things in one place and cover with a sheet.
- If spraying in cupboards line shelves with paper before putting back food or utensils. (You can remove paper later if you wish after the remains of spray have been removed by washing.)
- Cockroaches absorb poison through their feet so concentrate on places where they spend most time – around and inside cracks and other likely hiding places. There is no need to treat all floors and walls.

Check that the spray does not stain. A kerosene-based spray can leave an oily film if sprayed too heavily.

More Information

Contact the City of Kalgoorlie-Boulder Environmental Health Team on 9021 9600 or email mailbag@ckb.wa.gov.au.