

Cockroaches

Identification & control guidelines

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Cockroaches probably are the most common insect associated with human dwellings. Fortunately, here in the Northwest, cockroach infestations are relatively uncommon but still do occur. Five species are fairly common in Oregon around homes. These are the American roach, the oriental roach, the German roach, the brown-banded roach, and one that normally does not invade homes, the native wood roach.

Besides their importance as nuisance, roaches may transmit, by direct contamination of our food, many important diseases and parasites. They also may be responsible for disabling allergic reactions in sensitive individuals.

Natural History

Roaches are light brown to almost black insects with long antennae. Some are wingless, those with wings rarely fly. Their movement is often described as "scurrying". The young look much like adults but are smaller and wingless. The egg case is capsule-like. Roaches will eat all kinds of food, both human food and refuse. They are extremely adaptable and capable of invading almost any habitat. Once established, they can be very difficult to eliminate.

Roaches tend to congregate in preferred harborage sites. While not strictly a nest, the harborage does provide protection, especially for the young. The protection afforded by the harborage is one rea-

son why roach populations can build so dramatically.

Control

Severe infestations may require the experience of a professional pest control operator (PCO).

Sticky traps can be used to assess a roach population but are not effective at control. Effective control depends on (1) sanitation and (2) use of residual (long-lasting) insecticides. Furthermore, pesticides work best when the toxicant is placed or carried to the roach harborage.

While it may be possible to rid a single-family house of roaches, it is often impossible to completely eliminate them from a multi-family dwelling or neighborhood. So, be realistic in your expectations.

Insecticides used for roach control come in a variety of forms or formulations. There are low-toxicity dusts, useful for indoor treatments along baseboards and under cabinets. "Crack and crevice" sprays that are useful for spot treatments, and encapsulated insecticides for longer residual control. Poison baits and traps that can be purchased in any lawn and garden store as well.

A relatively new type of insecticide called "insect growth regulators" has become available recently. GencorTM (active ingredient = hydroprene) is one brand name. Insect growth regulators tend to have very low mammalian toxicity and very long resid-

ual activity. They work by stopping immature roach development. They are slow acting so they may be combined with other, more conventional materials. Bear in mind, that since adult roaches can live for several years (especially the American roach), treatment with a growth regulator that acts only on immatures, may not be effective by itself.

Things To Consider

Sanitation is the first and most important step in your roach control program.

Use boric acid dust (Roach Pruf™, Perma Dust PT 240™ (Whitmire), Hot Shot Roach Powder™, and other similar products), poison baits (Avert™, and others) or insect growth regulators indoors where appropriate.

Treat outdoor harborages with an encapsulated insecticide such as Empire 20™, Optem™, or Knox Out 2 FM™ for the longest residual control. Some encapsulated insecticides may be used indoors as well. Cypermethrin (Demon™) is another good choice for residual outdoor treatment.

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