



egg case

COCKROACHES

How to Get Rid of Cockroaches

Cut off their food and water supply and remove their hiding places by following the points listed in the section on discouraging cockroaches from moving in.

Use an insecticide. Commercial sprays, aerosols, and dusts are available from chemists and hardware shops. Choose one that is particularly recommended for cockroaches (some general insecticides may not be strong enough) and that will remain effective for several days or more after application. When applying insecticides remember these points:

- Either put all food in sealed containers or remove it from the area before you start.
- Use a residual spray rather than a dust in food areas.
- When spraying in cupboards and drawers remove all food and utensils and line shelves with paper before putting contents back.
- Check that sprays (particularly oil-based ones) do not leave stains.
- Don't treat all walls and floors, only areas around and inside cracks and other likely hiding places.
- Treat again about a month after the first application to get rid of newly hatched cockroaches which were protected initially by their tough egg cases.

Further Information

If you need further information or advice about getting rid of cockroaches, contact a health inspector at your district health office or local authority. Commercial pest control firms, which are listed in the yellow pages, can also give advice and assistance.



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Cockroaches are shiny brown crawling insects with flattish bodies and long feelers.

They are among the oldest creatures on earth; fossils show that they have existed almost unchanged for over a quarter of a million years. Today there are more than 3500 species spread throughout the world. Because of the part they play in spreading dirt and disease, cockroaches are an important public health risk.

Habits of Cockroaches

Cockroaches live mainly in and around buildings, where there is food, water, and warmth. Houses, restaurants, hotels, shops, and warehouses are favourite places. They also frequent drains and sewers.

By day cockroaches hide in cracks, coming out to feed and forage during the night. They prefer the kinds of foods that people eat but will also feed on paper, paint, and all sorts of rubbish and dirt.

Kinds of Cockroaches

The most common kinds found in New Zealand are the German, American, and Australian cockroaches.

The German cockroach, which is by far the commonest kind, is small — about 12 mm (1/2 in.) long — and pale brown. Adults live for about 10 months during which the female produces 4–8 egg cases each containing about 30–50 eggs. The young cockroaches hatch after about a month and become adults 1–4 months later. This species can therefore multiply very rapidly and, because the young tend to remain together, they soon reach a very high population density in any place they infest.

The American and Australian cockroaches are much larger than the German — about 35 mm (1 1/2 in.) long — but are much less common. Their life cycles follow a similar pattern but the young take longer to mature so populations do not increase so rapidly.

How can Cockroaches Cause Sickness?

Cockroaches are dirty insects. Their characteristic unpleasant smell taints food, and they leave droppings and cast-off skins about. They spread the dirt and bacteria they pick up on their bodies and feet as they crawl around in filthy places to areas where food is kept and on to food itself. They can therefore cause sickness and disease by:

- contaminating food and water supplies;
- contaminating benches and other surfaces where food is prepared;
- spreading germs of diseases such as salmonella food poisoning, gastro-enteritis, summer diarrhoea, and typhoid.

Discourage Cockroaches by Good

Hygiene

- Don't leave food or food scraps lying around.
- Wrap rubbish in paper and put it in a rubbish bin with a tight lid.
- Keep table tops, benches, and stove tops clean. Wash them down with soapy water every day after use.
- Keep the insides of cupboards absolutely clean by washing them out with hot soapy water regularly — the cockroach is attracted to the smallest crumb or the slightest food stain.
- Replace washers on dripping taps, because cockroaches are attracted to moisture and will come out to drink.
- Put all food, including jam, butter, bread, and sugar, in cockroach-proof containers.
- Seal any cracks in the kitchen or pantry walls and any gaps around shelves and fittings — cockroaches will hide away in the tiniest spaces.

How to Check if there are Cockroaches About

Look for signs such as empty egg cases, cast-off skins, droppings, and small brown smudges.

Surprise them — sneak into the kitchen late at night and put the light on suddenly. If they're there you'll see them scurrying away.