



COCKROACHES

Although cockroaches serve a useful function outdoors where they help recycle plant and animal wastes, they are not welcome indoors. Research clearly indicates that roaches can transmit disease-causing organisms from sewers, garbage cans, or bathrooms to kitchen counters and human food. Cockroaches can also trigger allergic reactions in some people.

Detection

Except for size and markings, all cockroaches are similar in overall appearance: flattened, oval-shaped insects with long antennae. Roaches are mainly active at night and generally remain hidden during the day in cracks and crevices near their source of food.

Use nontoxic sticky traps to locate roach habitat. Roaches like to travel by touching the edges of objects. Place traps along the edges of walls, appliances, cupboards, etc., and not in the middle of the room. Sticky traps with a nontoxic 'pheromone' attractant will catch more roaches. When you find out where roaches are hiding, you'll know where to concentrate your efforts.

What You Can Do

- **Use sticky traps for small infestations.** If you only have a few roaches, you may be able to control the problem with sticky traps.
- **Use a strong vacuum with a crevice attachment** to pull roaches from their hiding places.
- **Use insecticidal dusts such as diatomaceous earth (DE) or boric acid** in wall voids or cracks and crevices

before you seal them, and under large appliances or in other prime habitat. To gain access to a wall void, remove the cover plates on electrical outlets and switches.

When properly used, DE has little toxicity to humans and pets, but kills insects by absorbing their outer waxy coating, causing dehydration and death. Use DE sold for pest control and not for pool filters.

Although boric acid has a low acute (immediate) toxicity for humans and pets, it should be handled carefully and kept out of the reach of children and pets. For roaches, boric acid is a slow-acting but effective stomach poison.

When applying these dusts, use a hand duster and wear a dust mask, gloves, and safety goggles. Apply a very light coating because roaches will avoid piles of dust.

- **Use cockroach baits** because they use a minimum of insecticide and confine the poison to a very small area (see "Tips for Using Cockroach Baits").

Prevention

Prevent cockroach infestations by denying these insects access to your home and to the food, water, and shelter they need to survive.

- **Store food in refrigerator or in tightly sealed containers.**
- **Keep things clean and tidy.** Thoroughly clean counters and vacuum or sweep floors daily in eating and food preparation areas. Don't leave dirty dishes out overnight, even in the dishwasher. Any garbage containing food scraps should be removed from the house nightly. Thoroughly clean recyclables before storing them. At night, place pet food and water bowls in a moat of soapy water. Reduce clutter in all rooms (it provides habitat for roaches).
- **Keep things dry.** Fix leaky plumbing. Keep kitchen surfaces dry whenever they are not in use, especially overnight.
- **Seal cracks and crevices.** Before sealing, vacuum and wash the area to eliminate all roach egg cases, fecal matter, or other debris. Caulk and paint closed cracks around baseboards, cupboards, pipes, sinks, etc. Use mildew-resistant caulk in moist areas.

Prevention, cont.

- **Weather-strip around doors and windows** and repair holes in screens.
- **Inspect materials you bring into your house** for roaches or their egg cases. Pay special attention to used furniture and appliances and cardboard cartons from stores that sell food.
- **Monitor with sticky traps.** Once you have gotten rid of roaches or significantly reduced their numbers, continue to use sticky traps to alert you to a new infestation or a rise in the population. This is especially important in apartment buildings, condominiums, or other connected dwellings where roaches can easily move from one household to another.

Tips for Using Cockroach Baits

- Use baits indoors.
- Reduce other food sources so roaches will feed on baits.
- Use baits with boric acid, fipronil, or hydramethylnon.
- If you are using a gel bait, put small dabs in a number of locations rather than large blobs in a few locations.
- Place baits near areas where roaches are hiding, and between their hiding places and food sources.
- Place baits along the edges of walls, appliances, cupboards, etc., not in the middle of the room.
- Place baits where roaches are most likely to travel or congregate.
- Keep baits out of the reach of children and pets.
- Check bait stations frequently, especially if you have a large infestation. Empty bait stations should be removed because they make perfect roach hiding spots.

Products

Insecticidal Dust

Concern® Diatomaceous Earth Crawling Insect Killer and Surefire® Crawling Insect Killer

Boric Acid Powder

Roach Prufe®, Victor® Boric Acid Powder

Hand-Duster

Pest Pistol® (If unavailable locally, call 888-784-1722 to order.)

Sticky Traps

Black Flag® Roach Motel

Sticky Traps with pheromone attractant

Victor® Roach Magnet

Baits containing boric acid

Niban® Granular Bait, Niban FG, Seabright® Roach Free System Bait

Bait containing fipronil

Combat® Quick Kill Roach Bait Stations, Combat® Quick Kill Roach Control Gel

Bait containing hydramethylnon

Combat® Roach Control System, Combat® Roach Control Gel

Note: New products are constantly coming to the market. Brand names listed are for example only. No endorsement of specific products is intended nor is criticism implied of similar products that are not mentioned. Always use according to directions on product label.

For More Information

If you have questions about the information in this fact sheet, contact the Marin County Department of Agriculture at 415-499-6700, or the Bio-Integral Resource Center, PO Box 7414, Berkeley, CA 94707; 510-524-2567.