

Cockroaches, *Blattodea*, are insects to which we have a particular aversion. They make a mess and often occur in large numbers in places we certainly don't want to see them - in our kitchens and larders!

The cockroach – the world's oldest pest

THE COCKROACH IS ALSO one of the oldest insects in the world. Species very similar to present-day cockroaches have been found in deposits dating back to the Carboniferous period. This means that cockroaches are an astonishing 400 million years old. There are about 4 000 species, about ten of which live close to humans. The others can be found in the natural environment, mostly in the Tropics. The largest species can be almost 12 cm long and the smallest just a few millimetres.

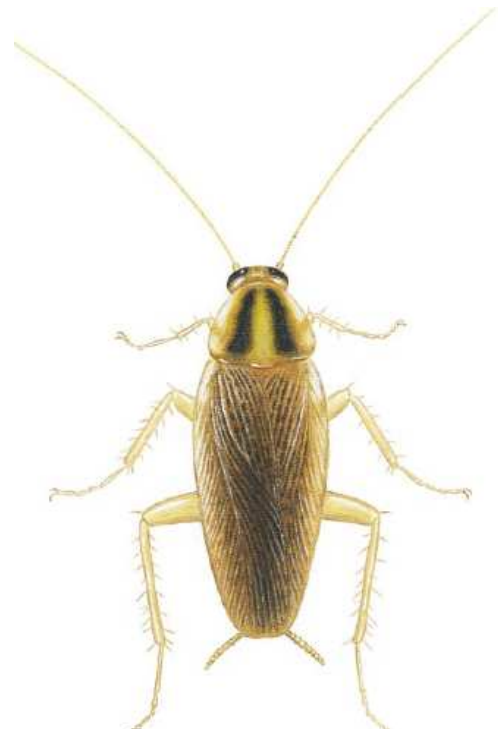
Cockroaches are closely related to grasshoppers and crickets. They are flat with a large neck shield, have large spiny legs and two long, thin antennae protruding from their inward-pointing head. The back of the fully-fledged adult is covered by a pair of parchment-like wings, although cockroaches don't normally fly long distances. Indoors, they normally move by running, and they can run very fast. The species that live and breed indoors in Sweden are the German cockroach, *Blattella germanica*, and the brown-banded cockroach, *Supella longipalpa*.

COCKROACHES ARE OMNIVORES. The species that occur in the Tropics live on the ground, where they degrade leaves and dead animals. In our indoor environment, they eat anything they can get at. They are averse to light and are therefore active at night. They give off a nasty-smelling secretion from glands in the abdomen and their droppings are also malodorous.

THE GERMAN COCKROACH. When we find cockroaches indoors in Sweden, they are normally German cockroaches. They do not originate in Germany but are probably from the sea-areas of Ethiopia and Sudan in Africa, arriving in Sweden in the 18th century in ship cargoes.

They have an oval, flattened body. A fully-grown German cockroach is 10-16 mm long, light brown in colour and with the neck-shield has two longitudinal bands. The female is darker and has a slightly rounder abdomen than the male.

JUST LIKE OTHER cockroaches, the German cockroach has an incredible reproduction capacity. Three to five weeks after fertilization, the female lays a capsule containing 30-40 eggs. These hatch just one day later. A single mating is sufficient to fertilize all the female's eggs and she constantly produces new egg capsules. A female lives 3-6 months. The German cockroach thrives best in warm, damp conditions and can withstand temperatures of up to +40° C and down to -5° C.



The German cockroach, 10-16 mm
Blattella germanica

THE BROWN-BANDED COCKROACH. The brown-banded cockroach, *Supella longipalpa*, is 9-14 mm and has two brown bands across its yellowish-brown wing sheaths. Becoming more prevalent in recent years, it likes warm conditions and prefers to live in and around heat-producing electric appliances. It is also called the TV cockroach because it can sometimes be found nesting in the corners of television sets.



THE DUSKY COCKROACH *Ectobius lapponicus* is 7-12 mm and normally lives outside but can sometimes come into our homes. It cannot, however, reproduce indoors.

Other cockroaches found in Sweden.



The oriental cockroach, 17-28 mm
Blatta orientalis



The American cockroach, 30-40 mm
Periplaneta americana



The Australian cockroach, 20-35 mm
Periplaneta australasiae

These species regularly come into the country via imported goods. The American and the Australian cockroach are more sensitive to temperature variation than the German cockroach. They thrive best in very damp and warm areas and are slow breeders.

COCKROACHES EAT ALMOST ANYTHING - from rotting and fermenting waste to flour, bread, butter, cooking oil, chocolate, sugar, honey, syrup, vegetables, cereals and meat products. If they have to, they also eat leather, wool, cotton and even paper and soap.

Cockroaches make a mess with their droppings and their malodorous secretions. It is basically impossible to save foodstuffs that have been attacked. The smell remains even if you boil it and the secretion can produce an allergic reaction in humans.

COCKROACHES ARE A MAJOR HEALTH RISK and as a result of their behaviour spread bacteria and viruses that can cause e.g. salmonella, MRSA and other hospital superbugs, and jaundice.

Restaurant kitchens, bakeries, food factories, breweries and laundries are examples of environments where cockroaches thrive. They can come into our homes in food products and once inside, they will look for a warm, damp place, e.g. in the kitchen or bathroom. Via pipes and electricity cables, they can easily spread through a property.

If you have a problem with cockroaches in your home or business, please contact Anticimex.