

Cockroach Information and Treatment Advice

German Cockroach (*Blattella germanica*):

German cockroaches are considered a public health pest as they feed on virtually anything (omnivorous). This feeding behaviour can result in cockroaches feeding in drains and waste storage areas. Diseases can then be picked up and transferred onto food products and surfaces. Infestations are often the result of broken drains or building defects. They carry bacteria which can be responsible for gastroenteritis, dysentery and typhoid. They can also pick up and transmit pathogens. In extreme cases cockroaches can also cause allergic reactions for some people, including asthmatics.

Cockroaches are distributed world-wide. Adults are easily recognized by their light brown or tan coloration with two black horizontal stripes located on the immediately behind the head, and growing to a length of 13-16 mm. The much smaller young, or nymphs, are darker, almost black in color, also with the black stripes behind the head.

Behavior, Diet & Habits:

Cockroaches are rarely able to survive out of doors in the British climate, but thrive around the heating ducts and boiler rooms of large centrally heated buildings e.g. hospitals, bakeries, hotels and restaurant kitchens, and blocks of flats. They cluster around pipes, stoves, and sinks, especially in humid areas, and will often remain hidden during the day.

In most cases, German cockroaches are introduced into a structure or residence when bags, boxes or cardboard containers are brought into the home. Cockroaches can even be transferred between locations, for example by eggs or adults being within products purchased from infested shops or used appliances. In blocks of flats, German cockroaches can easily move between flats, using the shared plumbing and pipes as a motorway.

Cockroaches will feed on almost anything, including refuse, faecal matter and food for consumption. They also require access to water, and will be generally found in inaccessible harbourages, close to water and food. Cockroaches can survive for several months without food, but will not live for more than a few days without water. These pests are known for their ability to capitalise on the availability of even the smallest amounts of food by feeding on crumbs missed during cleaning or feeding on the dirty dishes left in the sink overnight.

Reproduction:

German cockroaches are known for their ability to reproduce quickly. Female German cockroaches only need to mate once for the production of young. After mating, and under normal conditions, they will produce, on average, 4 to 6 egg cases during the course of their lives, with each egg case, or ootheca, containing

Approximately 30 to 40 eggs. This egg case is then carried by the female until 1 to 2 days before hatching. Depending upon the conditions, the average time for development, from egg to adult can range from 54 to 215 days, with an average of approximately 100 days. As adults, German cockroaches can survive anywhere from 100 to 200 days.

Signs of a German cockroach infestation:

- Droppings - German cockroach droppings may appear as small, dark, “pepper-like” material left on countertops or in drawers. Fecal staining may appear as dark spots or smears, some that are slightly raised, in the corners of rooms, along the tops of doors or around small cracks and openings into walls.
- Egg capsules - Since German cockroach females carries their egg case until 1 to 2 days before depositing it, empty egg cases may be found in areas that the females frequent.
- Odour - German cockroaches are also known to secrete a number of odorous compounds. When populations are present in large numbers, it may be possible to detect a mild “musty” odour.
- Live sightings – Cockroaches tend to be active during the night. On high level infestations sightings during the day is possible.

How to prevent an infestation and getting ill

Good housekeeping and hygiene should help prevent or control a cockroach infestation. In addition, if you have a cockroach infestation there is a risk that your food and food preparation surfaces will become contaminated and that family members could become ill from eating contaminated food.

The following suggestions may help to prevent an infestation and/or prevent food becoming contaminated:

- Keep all open food stuffs in tightly sealed containers
- Keep surfaces, food preparation areas and floors as clean as possible
- Thoroughly clean and sanitise food preparation surfaces and equipment before you prepare food. Use a sanitiser that has either BSEN 1276 or BSEN 13697 on the bottle and leave it on the surface for the contact time shown in the instructions.
- Clean kitchen areas intensively, focusing on areas where grease accumulates
- Clear up after every meal and do not leave food lying around, especially overnight
- Remove rubbish regularly from inside. Rubbish should be stored in sealed bins (i.e. wheelie bins) and kept away from the building
- Ensure any indoor drain access is sealed. The edges of lids should be greased to ensure they are completely sealed

Pest Control contact details

If you discover that you have cockroaches and you are on a means tested benefit Watford Council can provide a treatment service. Please contact **Watford Council on 01923 226400**.