



The German cockroach

The German cockroach is a pest to hygiene that can be introduced with purchased goods.

Key facts

- It multiplies in heated buildings and can transmit germs to food and human beings through faeces and vomit.
- It is nocturnal and favours warm, humid environments.
- Infestations have nothing to do with unhygienic living conditions and can affect anyone.
- They can only be properly treated by a professional pest control service; insect spray will not get rid of an infestation.
- If you are worried you may have an infestation, collect the insects and have them examined by a pest control professional.



German cockroach, photo: Reiner Pospischil

Appearance

- Adults are 9–15 mm long, brown and flat and have long antennae.
- Two black horizontal stripes on the pronotum are the key feature that distinguishes them from the indigenous forest cockroach, which is harmless. The forest cockroach does not have these stripes.
- They cannot fly.
- The faeces – small, dark granules – look like coffee grounds.
- Young insect (nymph): 2–9 mm long depending on age, no wings, darker than adults but similar in appearance.



Cockroach faeces and remains of egg cases, photo: UGZ



Adult German cockroach (left) with two nymphs of different ages, photo: UGZ

Habits

- In Switzerland, only in heated buildings; in apartments, primarily in kitchens and bathrooms.
- Nocturnal, runs away quickly and hides in crevices when exposed to light.
- Prefers dark hiding places, humidity and warmth: electrical appliances such as refrigerators, dishwashers, coffee machines etc.
- An indiscriminate omnivore: waste in rubbish bins, crumbs, splashes of grease.
- Can also appear in very clean households.

Life cycle

- Females lay egg cases that contain 36 eggs on average.
- From the egg to the fully grown cockroach takes approximately 100 days at 24 °C.

Distribution

- Today, they are distributed around the world.
- They are found in the hotel and restaurant trade, the foodstuffs industry, in shopping centres, in swimming pools and in hospitals, as well as in homes.

How do cockroaches get into a building?

- They are inadvertently introduced in luggage brought back from holidays, in used furniture, in packaging materials or from the workplace.
- Once inside the building, they move from apartment to apartment along ventilation ducts or pipes, for example.
- Typically, several apartments or the entire building will have problems with cockroaches.

Significance and impact on health

- Cockroaches never arise from dirt and do not point to a lack of cleanliness.
- They are unhygienic, can transmit germs and must be combated.
- Their faeces and shed skins can trigger an allergic reaction.

Combating cockroaches

- Cockroaches do not disappear by themselves.
- Cleaning does not help.
- Ask your neighbours if they also have problems with cockroaches and report the infestation to your property manager.
- Do not attempt to treat the infestation yourself using insect spray; the cockroaches may spread throughout the apartment or building.
- The cockroaches must be combated at the same time throughout the entire building.
- Leave treatment to a licensed Swiss pest control company.
- The aim should be to completely eradicate all cockroaches from the entire property.

Who is responsible for the cost of treatment?

- If more than one apartment in the building is infested, the property manager is required to appoint a pest control company to deal with the infestation. All the apartments in the building must then be checked for cockroaches.
- The costs incurred cannot be passed on to tenants. See our leaflet Pest infestations: your rights. Residential properties are governed by Articles 256, 257f, g, h, 258 and 259 of the Swiss Code of Obligations.

We are here to help

Call us, or send or bring in insects for us to inspect. We provide free advice to residents of Zurich.

Urban Pest Advisory Service

Telephone and personal appointments for residents of Zurich: Tel. 044 412 28 38; Mo–Fr: 1:30 pm–2:30 pm.

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