

Common Name: **American Cockroach**
Scientific Name: **Periplaneta americana**

AMERICAN COCKROACH



Introduction. The American cockroach is also called the “palmetto bug”.

Despite its name, the American cockroach is not native to North America but was most probably introduced via ships from Africa or Asia. It is worldwide in distribution.

Recognition. American cockroach adults measure 1 3/8 to 2 inches long and are colored reddish-brown except for a sub marginal pale mask-like pattern on the pronotal shield (on the back, just behind the head). Both sexes are fully winged. These cockroaches fly only short distances in the North but are moderately good fliers in the South.

Early instar nymphs are uniformly grayish-brown on top and underneath. Later instars are reddish-brown. The kidney bean-shaped egg capsule (ootheca) is brown to black and is about 3/8 inch long.

Similar Cockroaches. 1) The adult brown cockroach (*Periplaneta brunnea*) is nearly identical but has shorter spike-like appendages (cerci) protruding from the backward tip of the abdomen. Brown cockroaches are much less common in buildings. 2) The Australian cockroach (*Periplaneta australasiae*) has pale yellow margins on the forewings and a more distinct mask-like pattern on the pronotal shield behind the head. Australian cockroaches hide in palm trees and other tropical plants trucked in from Florida to conservatories, shopping malls, zoos and other indoor plantscapes in the North.



Residential Services ✧ Commercial Services ✧ Bird Solutions

Biology. The female American cockroach deposits or glues her egg capsule to a suitable surface, usually in a crack or crevice of high relative humidity near a food source. On the average, the female will produce about 9 to 10 egg capsules with each containing 14 to 16 eggs.

Developmental time (egg to adult) is greatly influenced by temperature, varying from less than 6 months to over 2 years. During this time, they molt 10 to 13 times. Adult American cockroaches may live from 3 months to 2 ½ years, depending on habitat.

Habits. Although American cockroaches are found in residences, they are much more common in larger commercial buildings such as restaurants, bakeries, grocery stores, food processing plants, hospitals, etc., where they usually infest food-storage and food-preparation areas, basements, and steam tunnels. During summer months, they can be found outdoors in yards and alleys. In the United States this is the most common species found in city sewer systems.

They can enter structures by being brought in, coming up from the sewer systems via drains, or occasional mass migration from other structures, dumps, etc., during warm weather. Although they feed on many kinds of food, they show a particular fondness for fermenting and starchy foods.

Cultural Control & Preventative Measures. Exercising good sanitation practices and performing thorough pest-proofing/exclusion in and around buildings will help make survival difficult for American cockroaches.

Items stored in cardboard boxes that had been kept in a building infested by American cockroaches should be removed from potentially-infested boxes, examined and replaced in clean boxes before transferal to a new site.

Professional Control. Varmant Guard pest management specialists readily control American cockroaches by 1) seeking out their harborages in buildings, tunnels and sewers and 2) removing them using pest vacuum cleaners, 3) trapping them using food lure sticky monitors and 4) making strategic placements of insecticide baits and dusts.