

Cockroach Identification Chart

There are approximately 3500 species of cockroach in the world and about 450 species in Australia. Only seven of these species, all introduced, are regarded as pests.

Pest cockroaches are undesirable insects in our environment. Cockroaches move quickly, are often associated with dirty conditions, and when present in large numbers can even produce a mild 'musty' odour. Cockroaches carry bacteria on their bodies from sewers, drains, garbage containers and other unhygienic areas then transmit these bacteria to humans by visiting kitchen and bathroom areas.

Feeding in such unhygienic areas brings cockroaches in contact with disease organisms including salmonella and other organisms associated with dysentery, typhoid, hepatitis and tuberculosis. People can become allergic to cockroaches and their faeces. There is a strong association between cockroach allergens and asthma but cockroaches can also cause rhinitis and dermatitis.

Family Blattellidae



German cockroach

Blattella germanica

Habitat

Kitchens, laundries and food preparation areas – damp and warm.

Description

The German cockroach's egg case (ootheca) is brown and is usually less than 6–7 mm long. Nymphs are dark brown to black, with distinct dark parallel bands running the length of the pronotum (shoulders) and yellowish in the centre. Nymphs do not have wings. The adult cockroach is light tan to medium brown, 10–15 mm in length. Wings cover the entire abdomen but they do not fly; there are two dark parallel stripes on the pronotum behind the head. The German cockroach is the most common cockroach in Australia.



Brown-banded cockroach

Supella longipalpa

Habitat

Kitchens, laundries and food preparation areas – dry and quite warm locations.

Description

The brown-banded cockroach's ootheca is tan coloured and only about 5 mm long. The adult cockroach is light tan to medium brown, 10–15 mm in length. Wings cover the entire abdomen and there are two pale parallel stripes on the pronotum behind the head. The brown-banded cockroach mainly occurs in tropical areas of Queensland and the Northern Territory.

Family Blattidae



American cockroach

Periplaneta americana

Habitat

Warm, moist dark areas such as steam ducts, drains, sewers and grease traps. Indoors they infest bakeries, abattoirs, food factories, restaurants and hospitals, and all areas including roof spaces. In warmer climates they infest outdoor areas, and are often found in garbage dumps, outbuildings, wood piles and palm trees.

Description

The American cockroach's ootheca is dark brown then black and is on average about 8 mm long – wider and darker than the ootheca of the German cockroach. The adult is reddish to chocolate brown and is usually 30–40 mm long. Its wings are fully developed and extend beyond the abdomen. It has a yellow band on the pronotum. The American cockroach is the largest of the pest cockroach species. American cockroaches can coexist with German cockroaches with no negative effects on either cockroach population.



Australian cockroach

Periplaneta australasiae

Habitat

The Australian cockroach is usually found outdoors, under bark and in wood piles and locations with moist and decaying vegetable matter. Inside it can be found in cupboards, behind drawers and in all food areas. It prefers warmer, humid environments.

Description

Australian cockroach nymphs are initially brown and wingless, with later instars becoming more like adults in shape, colouring and size. Later instars have distinct bright yellow spots along the edges of their abdomen. The adult is similar in appearance to the American cockroach but slightly smaller, 30–35 mm in length. Its wings are fully developed and extend beyond the abdomen. It has a distinctive pale yellow ring on the pronotum and a pale yellow margin on the front edges of each forewing.



Smoky-brown cockroach

Periplaneta fuliginosa

Habitat

These cockroaches prefer areas that are warm, very moist and protected, such as beneath mulch beds and ground cover or areas where there may be moisture problems around a home.

Description

The smoky-brown cockroach's ootheca is dark brown to black and is on average about 10–14 mm long. The adult is a uniformly shiny, blackish-brown and measures 30–35 mm in length. Wings are fully developed and extend beyond their body; they are strong fliers. They are prone to dehydration, so the availability of a moist environment is essential for survival. They are common around Sydney.



Oriental cockroach

Blatta orientalis

Habitat

Oriental cockroaches prefer cool, damp areas and are common in temperate climates. They are often found outside in the garden or in and around rubbish bins, drains and sewers. Inside, they are more commonly seen beneath the floor or in other cool areas such as basements and foundations.

Description

The oriental cockroach produces a dark, reddish-brown, slightly puffy ootheca that is 8–10 mm long. The adult is shiny dark brown to black and measures 20–30 mm in length. The shorter male has long, functional wings, covering two-thirds of its abdomen, while the wider-bodied female has short wings and cannot fly. This species cannot climb.

Cockroach Development – Comparison Table

Species	Oothecae				Period of nymphal development (days)	Adult life span (days)
	Size (mm)	Number per female	Number eggs per ootheca	Time to hatching (days)		
<i>Blattella germanica</i>	8x3	4–8	30–40	17	40	125–200
<i>Supella longipalpa</i>	5x3	12–15	10–18	40–100	60–270	100–315
<i>Periplaneta americana</i>	8x5	15–70	12–28	25–60	150–830	90–700
<i>Periplaneta australasiae</i>	10x5	12–15	24–28	40	200	240
<i>Periplaneta fuliginosa</i>	12x5	17	22–26	35–70	180–440	160–300
<i>Blatta orientalis</i>	10x5	5–10	12–18	40–80	165–280	60–275



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