



COCKROACHES IN COMMERCIAL KITCHENS AND RESTAURANTS



Not only do cockroaches carry diseases, but evidence of these insects in a commercial kitchen or restaurant can be a violation of local health code laws. In the age of social media, a single sighting and corresponding picture could permanently damage the reputation of your business.

The good news is that we know what draws these pests to an area, and by removing access to those resources, businesses can help prevent an infestation.

How do you know you have roaches?

There are a handful of signs that your business has a roach problem.

- 1. Bodies or body parts.** When roaches die, they tend to roll over on their backs. Seeing a dead body, belly-up, is a sure-fire way to identify a problem. These critters are cannibalistic, according to Home Advisor. Even though they won't kill each other, they will consume a dead body, which means you might only find fragments of a body leftover.
- 2. Feces.** German roaches are most common indoors and smaller than their American counterparts. The droppings of this species may look like coffee grounds or black pepper. The more fecal matter you find, the larger the infestation. Keep an eye open for evidence of droppings near cracks and crevices, as well as dark spaces like cabinets.
- 3. Egg casings.** Roach casings are called ootheca and each one carries multiple eggs. Some species will deposit their eggs in a safe place until they hatch, while others will carry the ootheca in their body until the last minute. Once the eggs hatch, the casing will be left behind which looks like a long, brownish oval. A single casing can hold up to 50 eggs, so if you're finding these on a regular basis, the problem may be extensive.
- 4. Odor.** Roaches give off a musky, oily smell. A single roach is not noticeable, but if your restaurant has developed a distinct odor around cracks, crevices or drains, it might signal a large population. Even if you don't see any other signs, this can be a huge problem for food-related businesses since it's believed that the scent of roaches can actually impact the way humans taste food.
- 5. Live sightings.** These nocturnal insects actively avoid light which is why you'll see them scurrying away if you flick a switch in the middle of the night. The only reasons a cockroach will leave its nest during the day is because it's forced out due to overcrowding, lack of food or a limited water supply.

Health implications of a cockroach infestation

It's believed that roaches can carry a variety of **bacteria and viruses**, reported the Better Health Channel.

These bugs eat just about anything, including old, rotting food. The bacteria ingested during those feeding sessions can last for months and then get passed on through its droppings. In kitchens and pantries, roaches may come out at night to feed and leave behind vomit

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and feces, contaminating the entire food supply. Some of the most common bacteria associated with roaches include salmonella, staphylococcus and streptococcus.

Viruses can also be carried by these pests, including polio.

Aside from disease, new research also linked cockroach infestations with higher rates of **allergies and asthma** in their human neighbors, according to Partners Healthcare.

What attracts cockroaches?

Like all pests, these insects are looking for food, water and harbor-age.

American Cockroaches prefer wetter environments so they will gravitate toward drains, leaky faucets, sinks and pipes. It's common to find them in basements and bathrooms. German Cockroaches don't need as much water, so they can live in wall cracks, cabinets, behind machinery and in food storage areas.

Small, dark spaces are ideal homes since roaches are thigmotropic, meaning they prefer to be touched on all sides at all times. That, in combination with the fact they are nocturnal, makes tiny holes and spaces between walls perfect hiding spaces. According to Sam Malyala, Technical Support Auditor at Abell Pest Control, a 1mm crack is large enough for entry.

In terms of food, anything will do. Glue, paper, rotting leftovers, crumbs and other dead roaches will all suit these omnivores. Kitchens are extra attractive due to accessible water sources in sinks and faucets as well as food scraps and stored ingredients.

Lifespan and reproduction

Once roaches move in, the problem can multiply quickly. The female German cockroach regularly produces 30-48 eggs at a time according to the College of Agricultural Sciences at The Pennsylvania State University, and can create four to eight egg capsules during their lives. Although females only live for 20-30 weeks, they can produce quite a few offspring. In a single year, over 10,000 descendants can be born.

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How to prevent roaches

A single roach can ruin a customer's experience with your restaurant or commercial kitchen. So how do you prevent these pests from entering your business?

Above all, practice good sanitation habits. Use clean water with detergent to wash all floors on a daily basis, disinfect counters, tables and sinks. Make sure to get all the cracks and crevices.

Any small appliances like blenders, refrigerators and dishwashers should be cleaned thoroughly including any removable parts.

Malyala recommended that all kitchens invest in moveable appliances and furniture since crumbs and food scraps can collect behind small stationary machines. Roaches can also make homes between walls and appliances if left uncleaned. On a regular basis, appliances should be moved for cleaning.

Regularly inspect the building for cracks or entry points. All spaces between baseboards, countertops or pipes should be filled with caulking or a similar material.

Since a water source is important for survival, drain all sinks when not in use and dry up any spilled water at the end of the night. Make sure to look for, and fix, any leaks in faucets or drains as roaches like to congregate in those areas.

No matter what, it's important to constantly inspect your kitchen for signs of roaches and never ignore the warning signs. By practicing proper prevention techniques, you may limit the likelihood of these pests entering in the first place.

Abell Pest Control is one North America's leading professional pest management companies. White Papers are supplied by Abell's national Quality Assurance team.

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