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Santa Rosa County Extension Service

A New Cockroach Invades Northwest Florida

The Asian cockroach has made its way up from Central Florida and is now established in the Panhandle. The Asian roach was first identified as a newly introduced species to the United States in 1986 when a professional pest control operator collected these insects in Lakeland, Florida. Entomologists believe they most likely were introduced into the U.S. through imports from Japan.

You may have seen Asian roaches and thought they were our common German roach. That's because adults of both species are almost identical in appearance. They both are about 5/8 inch long, brown to dark brown in color, and have two distinct parallel bands running the length of the pronotum, the area just behind the head. There are some slight morphological differences. For example, the wings of the Asian roach are usually longer and narrower than those of the German. However, Asian roaches generally are distinguished from their German relatives by where they live and how they behave.

The Asian roach normally lives outdoors in grass, leaves, or shaded mulched areas. Populations of 30,000 to 250,000 insects per acre have been reported. This species is a strong flier capable of sustained flight up to 120 feet. The German roach is not capable of sustained flight and prefers to live indoors.

Asian roaches become very active at dusk and adults are attracted to light-colored surfaces and brightly lit areas. They will invade any opening in a house, such as a lighted doorway or window. Once inside, they will crawl on an illuminated television screen and on walls while the lights are on during the evening.

Control of Asian roaches is difficult due to their mobility and abundance in outdoor sites. Treatments with residual sprays inside and around the perimeter of a structure are often ineffective due to numerous infestations in mulched and wooded areas. Even if populations within a yard are reduced, reinfestation is likely because of their ability to fly relatively long distances. Plus, adults enter homes through windows and doorways, avoiding areas typically treated for control of German roaches.

If using residual spray treatments focus on the exterior of the structure and treat in late afternoon/early evening. Pay close attention to spraying areas around or close to lights and around entry point such as windows and doors. You should also spray the ground around the perimeter, especially grass, leaf piles, mulched areas, or other such places

where these roaches are most likely to crawl, feed or hide. Limiting outdoor lighting from dusk until three hours after sundown will help prevent entry into the home. Sodium vapor lamps for security lighting and yellow incandescent bulbs for porch lighting are less attractive to adults and would thereby reduce attraction to lighting near buildings. Although Asian roaches are susceptible to all labeled pesticides, toxic palletized baits applied to infested areas outdoors have provided the most reliable control. For more information on cockroaches and their control contact your local county Extension office or go to the University of Florida/IFAS publication web site at <http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/> and type the word cockroaches in the “search edis” box.

Mike Donahoe is County Extension Director for Santa Rosa County.

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