

# American Cockroach

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**Genus:** *Periplaneta*  
**Family:** Blattidae  
**Order:** Blattaria  
**Class:** Insecta  
**Phylum:** Arthropoda  
**Kingdom:** Animalia



## Conditions for Customer Ownership

We are a USDA compliant facility and hold all necessary permits to transport our organisms. Each state is assisted by the USDA to determine which organisms can be transported across state lines. Some organisms may require end-user permits. Please contact your local regulatory authorities with questions or concerns. To access permit conditions, [click here](#).

**Never purchase living specimens without having a disposition strategy in place.** Live specimens should not be released into the wild! Please dispose of any unwanted organisms using the guidelines below.

## Primary Hazard Considerations

Always wash your hands thoroughly after you handle your cockroaches, its food, or anything it has touched. Cockroaches should be handled sparingly and gently.

## Availability

Cockroaches are available year round and are bred in the lab. Cockroaches will arrive in a paper container (or a paint can) with a moist paper towel. They can be kept in this container for 3–5 days before moving them to a new home. They should be 1–2 inches long and reddish brown.

## Captive Care

### Habitat:

- Any escape-proof container with holes for oxygen exchange. We use plastic or glass terrariums with screen tops. Line the container with organic soil or non-cedar woodchips. Cockroaches prefer the dark which can be accomplished by providing hiding places. These can be as simple as empty paper towel/toilet paper tubes or egg crates. Cockroaches don't mind being crowded, and with many hiding places you can easily house 10–20 cockroaches per square foot of space.
- Ideal temperature is about room temperature with 35%–45% (or moderate) humidity. Cockroaches are very hardy and have been known to survive extreme temperatures.

### Care:

- **Food:** Cockroaches are scavengers and will eat almost anything. We provide them with fresh vegetables and dry dog food.
- **Water:** Provide water for your cockroaches with a wet sponge or cotton ball (do not allow to dry). We use a wick system which is a loosely covered jar with water in the bottom and a cotton wick to provide a moist surface the roaches can drink from.
- **Care:** The habitat does not need to be cleaned often but if it develops mold or fungus, remove the growths immediately.

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## Information

- **Method of Reproduction:** Sexual. The female lays her fertilized eggs in a long brownish egg case called an ootheca. The female deposits her ootheca within a few days of formation, and it contains about 15 eggs. It is dropped, or glued to a surface with an oral secretion.
- **Sexing:** Both males and females have a pair of slender, jointed cerci (a pair of simple or segmented appendages at the posterior end of various arthropods that act as sensory organs). The male American cockroaches have a pair of styli (spikes) between the cerci while the females do not. The wings of the male extend beyond the end of the abdomen, while the females' do not.

## Life Cycle

- **Egg:** Contained in a case called an ootheca which is dropped from the body. Eggs are left to hatch into nymphs about a month after fertilization, depending upon the temperature.
- **Nymph:** Molts approximately 13 times in 5–20 months before becoming sexually mature (an adult). It is an example of incomplete metamorphosis.
- **Adult:** (We ship adult cockroaches.) The adult American cockroach lives for about 1 more year and can reach 3–4 centimeters long. The adult American cockroach does have wings, and can fly, although it seldom does. The cockroach prefers to “glide” rather than fly.

## Wild Habitat

American Cockroaches are native to subtropical habitats of forests and grasslands and were introduced centuries ago from Africa, by human trading across the oceans. The specific name of Americana is misleading due to its African origin. The American Cockroach has many predators including frogs, toads and salamanders. There is a parasitic wasp that deposits its eggs into the oothecia so that the larva can feed on the eggs of the cockroach.

## Special Notes

- The cockroach is found in caves, mines, cesspools, sewers, sewage treatment plants, in garbage, dumps, anywhere there is a significant amount of food, water and darkness. Many species of bacteria, virus, fungi, and protozoa, as well as worms, have been isolated from field collected American cockroaches. Cockroaches can also soil items with their excrement and regurgitation. Adults can live at approximately two to three months without food, a month without water, and can survive extreme temperatures.
- The American cockroach is a typical example of incomplete metamorphosis. It is also widely used in experiments on physiology and testing insecticides

## Disposition

- We do not recommend releasing any laboratory animal into the wild, and especially not insects that are considered to be pests or are not native to the environment.
- Adoption is the preferred disposition for any living animal.
- If the insects must be euthanized at the end of study, follow one of these procedures:
  - Put them into a container or bag and freeze for 48 hours.
  - Place the organism in 70% isopropyl alcohol for 24 hours.
  - Autoclave the organism @ 121°C for 15 minutes.
- A deceased specimen should be disposed of as soon as possible. Consult your school's recommended procedures for disposal. In general, dead insects should be handled as little as possible or with gloves, wrapped in an opaque plastic bag that is sealed (tied tightly) before being placed in a general garbage container away from students.