

Asian cockroach moves to North Florida

When people first see the Asian cockroach they may think they are seeing little flying moths. Or they may believe they are seeing the German cockroach because the two species look very similar but there are differences, particularly in behavior. But most people don't realize they are seeing a relatively new roach species that has invaded Florida.

The Asian cockroach was first identified as a newly introduced species in the U.S. in Lakeland, Florida in 1986 where a professional pest control operator found and collected the insects. He called them German cockroaches but noted that their behavior was unlike any other German cockroaches he'd seen. The Asian cockroach was first described from insects collected in Okinawa, Japan in 1981. This species is now found throughout Florida and parts of the southeastern United States.

In appearance, both the German and Asian cockroach adults are about 5/8 inch long and are brown to dark brown in color with two darker parallel bands running lengthwise just behind their head. But unlike the German cockroach, the Asian cockroach is a strong flier with sustained flights of at least 120 feet. This is why some people think they are seeing moths. As a person is watering a mulched plant bed with a hose, the water disturbs the roaches and they quickly fly out of the mulch, resembling little moths. Or you may see them flying out of the lawn as you mow.

Also, unlike the German cockroach, which prefers to live indoors and is a major household pest as a result, the Asian cockroach prefers to live outside in shaded mulched beds, compost piles and even in lawns. Their numbers can be high with populations of 30,000 to 250,000 per acre reported.

They become active at sundown and are attracted to lights. As a result, they often fly inside through any opening in a house such as a lighted doorway or window. Once inside, they will fly to and crawl on illuminated television or computer screens and on walls while the lights are on during the evening. This is when many people believe they are seeing a German cockroach invasion in their house. But even though German cockroaches have wings, they do not fly.

Many people become upset when they see Asian roaches inside their home. But even though we don't want to see any roaches inside, the good news is that indoor infestations are rare occurrences.

Even though they are very susceptible to insecticides, Asian cockroaches are difficult to control because of their abundant population and their ability to fly considerable distances.

Because they can fly 120 feet or more in a single flight, large areas around a home require treatment. And cockroaches in surrounding untreated areas may result in reinfestation.

Residual sprays around the perimeter of structures are usually unsuccessful because of numerous infested areas in adjacent lawns, mulch and wooded areas. Adults enter homes through windows and doorways and immediately fly to walls, avoiding baseboards and other typical areas that are normally treated for German cockroaches.

The best control has been attained by using insecticide baits (labeled for roach control) in infested areas outdoors.

For additional information on Asian cockroaches and their control, contact your local UF/IFAS Extension Office or visit these UF/IFAS Websites.

http://creatures.ifas.ufl.edu/urban/roaches/asian_cockroach.htm

<http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/MG202>

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