

Troubleshooting German Cockroach Problems in Restaurants

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German cockroaches are devious creatures. Years ago, they were considered the number one pest found in structures. Since then, ants moved into the number one slot, only to be recently knocked out by bed bugs. Who wins in all this jockeying for position? Why, the devious cockroach does.

There's no doubt that baits have been a great tool for cockroach control, allowing us to get a higher level of control with less effort. In the past, we had to find and spray every cockroach harborage in order to get control. We learned how to relentlessly seek out and find cockroach harborages because, if we didn't, we got callbacks.

Baits attract cockroaches, making the skill of relentlessly finding cockroach harborages less important. Oftentimes, we can control a problem without finding all the harborages. From our perspective, this is a good thing, since it's made cockroach control easier than in the past. However, wouldn't the cockroaches also want us to be less effective at finding their harborages?

It's easy to blame control failures on resistance or on bait aversion. Although that's certainly a concern, it's normally not the issue. The majority of cockroach callbacks come from not relentlessly finding (and then treating) their harborages. We need to remember how devious cockroaches are.

If you are getting callbacks for German cockroaches in a restaurant or if you keep finding German cockroaches each service, you need to dig deeper into what is going on in the account. Here are some steps that can help.

1. Put out glue boards to see if the problem is localized. If a glue board captures smaller nymphs or females with egg cases, you know that a harborage is nearby and can intensify your inspection in that area. Also, look at the pattern of where in the restaurant you are capturing cockroaches. Is there an area you haven't checked – like perhaps a locked office or storage room – that, if infested, would explain the pattern?
2. Inspect deeper inside kitchen equipment. Equipment often has panels that can be pulled off. You need to take these off to inspect. Find a way to get down underneath and behind the equipment. Cockroaches are not going to make it easy on you. If it's just too tight to access, use an inspection mirror.
3. If you are repeatedly finding cockroaches around hot equipment, despite treatments with gel bait, try another formulation. Hot conditions can make gel baits less effective. A dry flowable bait, a bait station, a dust, or even a residual aerosol treatment can solve this problem.

4. Look for areas where disrepair has created access to voids. Metal or plastic sheeting on the walls can come up, creating voids. Tiles can come loose. Unsealed holes can allow access to wall voids. These areas need to be treated if cockroaches are being found nearby and, if possible, repaired.

5. Is the problem in fact a reintroduction issue? Make sure you inspect the food storage area, coat racks, and employee locker area. Also, consider if any adjoining units, like another restaurant next door, might be the source.

6. Step back and look for less obvious sources for cockroaches that have not been inspected. Where are there sources of warmth that have been overlooked, such as compressor motors on walk-in coolers? Have you checked the ceiling area, especially around lights? Where are there food sources that have been overlooked, such as spillage around booth seating?

Sometimes it seems like certain restaurants will always have German cockroach infestations. It doesn't need to be that way. Intensify your inspection using these tricks, find the cryptic areas that cockroaches have turned into harborages, and you will see better results with problem accounts.

About the Author

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