

# Brown-banded Cockroach

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The **brown-banded cockroach**, *Supella longipalpa*, is a small species of cockroach, measuring about  $\frac{5}{8}$  in (10 to 14; mm) long. It is tan to light brown. It has two light-colored bands across the wings and abdomen; they may sometimes appear to be broken or irregular but are quite noticeable. The bands may be partly obscured by the wings. The male has wings that cover the abdomen, while the female has wings that do not cover the abdomen completely. The male appears more slender than the female, the female appears wider.



The brown-banded cockroach has a fairly wide distribution, being found in the northeastern, southern, and Midwest regions of the United States quite commonly. They are one of the most recent alien cockroaches to form breeding colonies in Britain and Ireland. They need less moisture than the German cockroach so they tend to be more broadly distributed in the home, such as in living rooms and bedrooms. They can often be found in homes and apartments, but are less common in restaurants. They tend not to be found in the daytime, since they avoid light.



The brown-banded cockroach eats a wide variety of items. Cockroaches are usually scavengers, and thus can eat a wide array of items, often almost anything organic, including decaying matter. It has been known to cause problems in hospitals by emerging at night to feed on bodily fluids, thereby risking cross-infection.

**Habits** Male brown-banded cockroaches have been observed to fly indoors. Among cockroach species, brown-banded cockroaches have the most distinctions between sexes. Females have larger abdomen and shorter wings than males. Brown-banded cockroaches often hide their egg cases in or under furniture. Dead specimens have been known to be imported in furniture.

**Habitat** Within a room, these roaches tend to prefer warmer, drier, and higher locations than do any of the other urban pest roaches. They are often found in upper cabinets or in other rooms than the kitchens (food preparation areas) or bathrooms.

**Threats** Cockroaches have been reported to spread at least 33 kinds of bacteria, six kinds of parasitic worms, and at least seven other kinds of human pathogens. They can pick up germs on the spines of their legs and bodies as they crawl through decaying matter or sewage and then carry these into food or onto food surfaces. Germs that cockroaches eat from decaying matter or sewage are protected while in their bodies and may remain infective for several weeks longer than if they had been exposed to cleaning agents, rinse water, or just sunlight and air. Recent medical studies have shown that cockroach allergens cause lots of allergic reactions in inner city children. They were even shown to cause asthma in children. These allergens build up in deposits of droppings, secretions, cast skins, and dead bodies of roaches.

