



County of San Diego

DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH AND QUALITY

FOOD, WATER, AND HOUSING DIVISION

OPERATOR GUIDANCE - COCKROACHES: HOW TO RESPOND?

The Department of Environmental Health and Quality (DEHQ) protects public health by implementing the Food Safety Program that is responsible for the oversight of all retail food facilities within the county. As part of retail food facility operations, when an imminent health hazard is observed, like the presence of cockroaches, steps need to be taken to protect the health of the public.

If a food facility operator observes evidence of a cockroach infestation within their facility, they must immediately stop food service and work to resolve the issue prior to reopening their business to protect the general public from diseases caused by the presence of cockroaches within a food facility.

Should evidence of cockroaches be observed during an inspection by DEHQ staff, the facility will be ordered closed until the facility has taken the proper steps to correct the problem and another inspection is conducted to verify compliance.

STEPS TO ELIMINATE COCKROACH ACTIVITY AT YOUR FACILITY

Do not call for a re-inspection until all of the following items have been completed:

1. Pest Control - Eliminate Cockroach Activity Safely and Quickly

Licensed pest control service is a necessary part of eliminating a cockroach infestation. While you could try eliminating the problem yourself, complicated issues such as cockroach activity are best left up to professionals that can treat your facility quickly and most importantly, safely. The chemicals that will be used to rid your facility of cockroaches are very poisonous and must be administered by a certified pest control operator licensed with the State of California. You can find lists of certified pest control companies in your local directory. All cockroaches must be eliminated prior to requesting a reopen inspection.

If you already have a service company under contract, call them and let them know that you need their services to abate a cockroach infestation at your facility. A certified pest control company will treat your facility, provide documentation of the service and let you know when it is safe to re-enter the building and begin the clean-up. It is imperative that you work with your pest control company to determine the order in which the treatment, cleaning, and exclusion work (sealing of holes, cracks, and crevices) should be completed so that the elimination can be most effective. Your DEHQ inspector will request to see the pest control receipts of service during any re-inspection to reopen your facility.

2. Remove Dead and Dying Cockroaches, Clean and Sanitize the Facility

Effective treatment by your certified pest control company will abate the cockroach infestation, but this can take time depending on the level of infestation. Once it is safe to re-enter your facility, it is time to clean up. Ensure all dead and dying cockroaches are removed, including all egg casings carried by the adult female cockroaches. Failure to remove the egg casings could result in re-infestation as numerous live baby cockroaches, called nymphs, that survived the initial pesticide treatment can emerge. Ensure all food contact surfaces and non-food contact surfaces are properly washed and sanitized. All cleaning must be completed prior to requesting a reopen inspection.

3. Eliminate Harborage Areas Associated with the Infestation

Once all cockroach activity has been successfully eliminated, and all evidence has been removed through thorough cleaning and sanitizing, it is important to take steps to prevent reoccurrence. Remove clutter and unused equipment, and eliminate gaps in the walls, ceiling, shelving, or other deteriorated surfaces that can serve as future harborage areas and pose a barrier to effective pest control. Proper exclusion work must be completed prior to requesting a reopen inspection.

4. Conduct a Self-Inspection of the Facility

Once licensed pest control treatment has been completed, the facility is thoroughly cleaned and sanitized, all vermin proofing measures have been completed, and all holes, harborage areas, or entry points have been sealed, the next step is to conduct a self-inspection of the facility.

Using a flashlight, look around all food and beverage preparation areas and dish washing areas for signs of cockroaches. Look underneath and behind all equipment, in corners, and on the underside of shelving. Once you have verified that there is no further evidence of infestation within the facility, contact your area inspector to schedule a re-inspection. If you are unable to contact your inspector, you can reach the Specialist on Duty at 858-505-6900 and your request will be routed to the area inspector. During the inspection, if any evidence of cockroach activity is observed, the facility will need to remain closed and the above steps will need to be repeated until no evidence exists, and the facility can be safely reopened to the public.

SAVE TIME AND MONEY

If you have not completed the above items, **DO NOT REQUEST A RE-INSPECTION**. The assigned EHS Inspector will not be able to approve the facility to re-open unless all the actions listed above have been completed. Repeat inspections will be subject to additional re-inspection fees.

INFESTATION PREVENTION STEPS

The Food Facility Manager or Person in Charge is responsible for conducting initial and ongoing food facility assessments to ensure consistent compliance with food safety requirements and for training employees to prevent future cockroach infestations. To maintain a cockroach-free facility, it is important to routinely complete the following procedures:

- Inspect all deliveries and refuse any products that appear to have signs of cockroach activity.
- Regularly and thoroughly clean your facility to remove accumulated food residues, debris, and water sources for cockroaches.
- Store food inside vermin proof containers/equipment.
- Regularly repair and maintain your facility to eliminate possible harborage for cockroaches.
- Routinely inspect your own facility and look for signs of cockroach activity.
- Maintain a monthly service with a certified pest control operator with options to increase frequency of treatment as needed.
- Communicate regularly with your pest control company. They typically complete treatment while no one is present, so it is important to ensure they provide a receipt with notes and that you call them after a site visit to communicate about their findings and if there are any specific areas that need more cleaning or sealing/repair.
- Train staff to identify evidence of cockroaches and implement a policy to ensure they report their observations to management.
- If evidence is observed, immediately close the facility and take the necessary steps to remove the cockroach infestation from the facility prior to reopening to the public.