

Crickets¹

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Crickets are sometimes nuisances in buildings and they may also damage fabrics or other materials. They are especially destructive to silks and wools. They are also attracted to perspiration and other stains on clothing and fabrics. Occasionally crickets invade a structure in large numbers. They are often attracted to lights around a building at night. Besides the damage they may cause, they produce a chirping sound which may, after a period of time, annoy inhabitants.

Crickets belong to the insect order Orthoptera and are related to grasshoppers. These insects do not undergo a complete metamorphosis, therefore, the young resemble adults except they do not have functional wings. Young and adults both have similar feeding habits.

The most common crickets to invade buildings include the house cricket, *Acheta domesticus*, and the field cricket, *Gryllus* spp., which are very similar in appearance.

House cricket (Figure 1) adults range in length between 1/2 and 3/4 inch. They may be light yellowish brown, with three dark bands on the head, or solid shiny black. This species has long, slender

antennae. The field cricket is slightly larger, up to 1 inch in length, and usually brown or black. Females of both species have a long, thin ovipositor projecting from the tip of the abdomen.

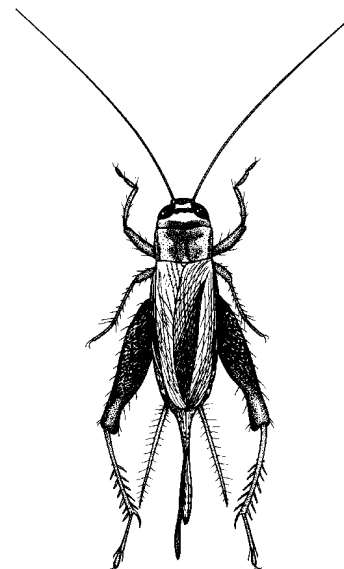


Figure 1. House cricket.

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Management Guidelines for Crickets

The key to managing crickets in buildings is exclusion. Cracks and other openings from the outside that provide access to the building should be sealed. Caulk or otherwise seal cracks and crevices inside the building that provide hiding places. Behind or under heavy furniture and appliances or in other inaccessible areas, it may be possible to remove crickets using a strong vacuum cleaner. Weeds and debris around the outside of the building should be removed to eliminate attractive habitats. Change outside lighting to sodium vapor lights or yellow incandescent lights that are less attractive to crickets (and other insects). Garbage and other refuse that serves as food should be stored in containers with tight lids and elevated off the ground on platforms or bricks.

Insecticides should be used only when exclusion and sanitation cannot accomplish control quickly enough to stop the damage within a reasonable time. Use liquid sprays of an insecticide registered for use indoors as a spot spray in cracks and crevices and other areas where crickets may hide. Sorptive powders may also be blown into inaccessible areas. Apply liquid sprays around the perimeter of the building or in other outdoor areas if crickets cannot be controlled through sanitation. Avoid using outdoor spray materials indoors unless the label states that this is permissible. Insecticide impregnated baits or granular formulations of certain materials may also be used outdoors around buildings for cricket control. Baits formulated for mole cricket or roach control may be used for house and field cricket control. Some baits can be applied indoors, but only to areas inaccessible to children or pets. Granules are suitable in lawns and other areas subject to moisture or frequent watering. Avoid the use of baits or granules if children or pets can gain access to them.

Cricket infestations are usually seasonal. Most often problems occur during the fall as evenings become cooler and the insects seek buildings for warmth and shelter. Because of this, applications of long-residual insecticides are not usually needed indoors for adequate control.