

HEALTH EDUCATION ASPECTS OF COCKROACH CONTROL

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Many borough and town councils are now acknowledging a longterm cockroach problem. Following several legal judgements against them they are beginning to develop policies and precedures to deal with these insect pests on a long term basis. Whilst there is still insufficient funding in many councils to deal with the problem in a truly cohesive way, one area that may be easy to develop is that of health education for the general public.

Research in local libraries and amongst environmental health departments has revealed little information on cockroaches of use to the general public. Much of that available is out of date and only available in books such as Mrs. Beeton's book of Household Management and Collin's Dictionary of Household Hints, or written in professional jargon and geared only to the use of pesticides. There is no publication which deals with general, up to date information on cockroaches and which helps the householder to understand the size of the problem or what he can do to help.

Environmental health officers, pest control companies and their staff, along with health professionals, have a responsibility to give good viable information to their clients and tenants, or to any member of the public seeking information and yet this is an often overlooked area. As part of an intergrated pest management programme it would seem sensible to involve the tenants and clients on whose behalf these policies are being developed, and to be able to elicit their co-operation by giving them good basic information to help minimise the cockroach problem.

Following a seminar on cockroaches organised by The Medical Entomology Centre in 1991, and with the help of Roussel Uclaf a comprehensive health education document has now been produced. The document will stand alone but it could also be used in conjunction with other information, eg information on pesticides or on preparing premises for block treatment.

The publication has been aimed at a reasonable level of intelligence and contains no professional jargon. It does not mention insecticides *per se*, but emphasises the need for professional help. It also points out that councils have legal powers to enforce compliance. However, the main aim is to give householders relevant biological facts whilst concentrating on ways in which they can drastically reduce any infestation to acceptable levels, if it is not possible to eliminate them altogether.

This document is the first to give information on cockroaches to the general public in an easy to understand format. It will form a good base for any future publications, including books on household management, and could easily be incorporated into other literature issued by pesticide companies and environmental health departments.