

Madagascar Hissing Cockroach

Class: Arthropods Order: Blattaria Family: Blattidae
Gromphadorhina portentosa

Description: Cockroaches are found on every continent, including Antarctica. They are considered the most primitive of insects because they have not changed in the last 250 million years.

Length: 2-3 inches

Weight: .2 to .3 ounces

Habitat: Floor of tropical forests, near river banks, around logs or trees.

Distribution: Madagascar

Diet: Various plant and animal matter

Life Span: In captivity 2 years

Status: Stable

Special Characteristics:

- Males have a set of protrusions resembling two humps on their head. They use these horns to ram other males when establishing or defending their territory.
- Along the sides of its body is a row of holes called spiracles used for respiration. When the Hissing Cockroach is threatened, it depresses its abdomen sending air out of its spiracles producing a loud hissing noise scaring the predator.
- The hissing noise is also used as a means of communication during courtship and mating and by males to defend their territories from other males.
- All insects have three body segments: the head, thorax and abdomen. The Hissing Cockroach has an outer shell that extends over the head and the entire body for protection.
- Unlike some cockroaches, the Hissing Cockroach does not have wings.
- Nocturnal
- The cockroach is invaluable for recycling a large majority of the earth's dead and decaying plant and animal matter. Without the cockroach, tropical forests would smother from and die from dead and decaying vegetation.
- Lives in large colonies. One male will dominate and hold a territory with several females. No other male is allowed in. If another male enters, it is pushed out of the territory by the dominant male. Females may come and go within these male dominated territories.
- Besides the normal insect predators, the Hissing Cockroach must deal with a tiny cockroach mite that feeds on its body.

Reproduction:

- Mating occurs throughout the year, but only if the climate is warm.
- After separating, the female stores fertilized eggs in her ootheca, an inch long, yellowish egg case. The ootheca may be kept inside or outside the body of the female.
- At least 60 days later 15-40 cockroach babies called nymphs are born.
- Nymphs will molt 6 times in 6 months before becoming sexually mature. Adults do not molt again.

