

GERMAN COCKROACHES IN A COMMERCIAL BAKERY.

CASE STUDY



SNAPSHOT



INDUSTRY

Food processing



TARGET PEST

German cockroaches



OVERVIEW

Thorough inspections uncovered a significant cockroach problem in a commercial bakery. Learn how our experts solved it.

SITUATION SUMMARY

The German cockroach is the most common species in the U.S. and carries a variety of pathogens, including some of those responsible for foodborne illness. German cockroaches enter facilities primarily by catching a ride in with employees or on incoming goods. Food processing facilities in particular offer the warmth, moisture, and abundant food necessary to be ideal habitats for this pest, and infestations are most common in areas with regular steam or liquid exposure. These cockroaches are typically found close to exposed food and production areas, raising contamination concerns. In this commercial bakery, chronic issues were traced to the production area, specifically near proofer ovens, which can offer German cockroaches the perfect levels of heat and humidity.

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INSPECTION FINDINGS

To identify the source of the infestation, our experts conducted a thorough initial inspection. They found German cockroaches heavily concentrated at the base of walls and doors of the walk-in proofer ovens. Since exposed bakery products were moved in and out of these proofers on carts, the presence of cockroaches there posed a serious food safety risk due to potential direct contact with the food. The inspection also revealed cockroaches around oven insulation and in the product mixing areas. However, no cockroaches were found in the storage areas, and only limited numbers were identified in the packaging area, confirming the infestation was centered around the production and processing equipment.



SUCCESSFUL SOLUTION

To fully locate hidden German cockroach populations and track treatment success, experts implemented an extensive monitoring program. Numbered glue traps, secured in plastic holders to prevent wash-off during cleaning, were mapped and placed throughout the processing floor, packaging areas, employee break rooms, and locker rooms. Monitoring employee areas was critical since employees can introduce pests from other locations.



COCKROACHES AND RESPIRATORY ISSUES.

Cockroaches are a known source of allergens and can worsen asthma symptoms in some people.¹

¹ American Lung Association. "What makes indoor air unhealthy? Cockroaches," <http://www.lung.org>. Updated November 2, 2023. Accessed November 14, 2023.

A key non-chemical strategy for control is harborage removal. While complete food source removal is difficult, eliminating hiding places reduces survival. The first step was having the client seal the bases and doors of the walk-in proofer ovens.

Insecticide baits and targeted applications were used cautiously to reduce the pest population. Insecticides were applied in cracks and crevices around oven walls and insulation that provided deep harborage sites.

Monitoring, inspection, and treatment efforts revealed cockroaches not only in the ovens but also in the complex walls of the mixing tanks. The tanks had outer stainless steel seals that were compromised, allowing moisture to seep into the insulation layer, creating an ideal environment for cockroaches. After consultation, it was determined that the mixing tank design needed modification to eliminate this significant harborage point.



SUMMARY

This successful cockroach elimination utilized Integrated Pest Management (IPM), centered on intensive inspection and monitoring to locate all hidden harborage sites, like in the oven and mixer insulation. Working with the client, equipment modifications were made to both eliminate current issues and prevent future infestations. Chemical treatments alone would have failed without these changes. Ongoing monitoring and visual inspections remain essential to quickly address any new pest activity.

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