

Crickets

Singing crickets are a charming aspect of late summer and fall in Maryland, but when the incessant chirping moves indoors, homeowners reach for the bug spray. There are more effective, more permanent, and much less toxic ways of keeping crickets outside and eliminating those that do enter the home. This leaflet will answer some of the most frequently asked questions about these occasional invaders.



Black Field Cricket

DESCRIPTION AND HABITAT

Home invading crickets are usually one of three kinds:

The **house cricket** is 19-22 mm (3/4 - 1 inch) long, light yellowish brown with three dark bands on the head. They are especially fond of warmth but can be found in any part of the home.

Field crickets are robust black insects 13-33 mm (1/2 - 1 1/4 inches) long. They are usually found on the lower floors and in the basement.

The **camel cricket** is named for its humped appearance when viewed from the side. These crickets have extremely long antennae and rear legs. They range from light tan to dark brown in color and are 13-33 mm (1/2 - 1 1/2 inches) in length. Camel crickets' desire for dark moist places almost always restricts them to damp basements and crawl spaces.



Camel Cricket

SONGS

Of the three common cricket invaders, only house and field crickets sing. Sound is produced when the males rub a sharp edge at the base of one front wing along a file-like ridge on the underside of the other wing. The warmer the temperature, the faster they sing. (Count the number of chirps in 15 seconds then add 40 for a temperature estimate.) There are three types of songs: a call to attract females, an aggressive song to warn away other males, and a courtship song prior to mating. Crickets hear songs with "eardrums" located on their front legs.

ECONOMIC IMPORTANCE

Chirping is the trait that most annoys homeowners with indoor crickets. Chewing damage can occur on fabrics made of wool, silk, nylon, rayon, cotton or linen. Furs and rubber may also be nibbled. All fabrics are much more liable to attacked if they are soiled with body oils, perspiration, or food stains. Unless dozens of crickets are in the home, damage is usually so minor it goes unnoticed.

CONTROL

Cricket-Proofing

Although house and camel crickets may reproduce indoors, most pest crickets wander in from outside. A cricket chirping under the refrigerator signals the need for some minor home repairs. Doors should fit tightly; adjust, repair, or replace weather-stripping and thresholds. Caulk, screen, plaster, or use polyurethane insulating foam around basement window frames, dryer vents, and entrances for plumbing and wiring. Crawl space vents should be properly screened.

Discouraging Crickets

To limit the numbers of crickets in the immediate vicinity of the home, practice good sanitation. Clean up piles of leaves, bricks or lumber next to the foundation. Store firewood away from the foundation. Ivy and other ground cover should be trimmed at least 18 inches away from the wall. Mow lawns regularly. Crickets often occur under garbage cans in great numbers. Elevating the cans on bricks or placing them on a cement pad will eliminate hiding areas.

House and field crickets are attracted to light. Use shades or drapes on brightly lit windows and limit use of outside house lights during cricket season. If porch lights are necessary, try one of the non-attracting yellow bug lights.

De-cricketing the House

The vacuum cleaner is one of the most effective and least toxic means of eliminating invading crickets. If you can't catch them with the vacuum, try placing sticky traps near their singing areas. These are the same traps sold for cockroach control in the local grocery and hardware stores. If your problem is camel crickets in the basement, solving the high moisture problem and cricket-proofing usually solves the cricket problem. Fix leaks, dehumidify, and use sticky traps.

Chemical Control

Indoor cricket control can be achieved by non-chemical, non-toxic methods. In extreme situations the use of baits or perimeter sprays OUTDOORS is justified while sanitation measures and home repairs are being completed. A variety of products available to homeowners are labelled for cricket control.

Licensed pest control operators can be hired if you prefer not to handle pesticides.

Chemical control should only be used in conjunction with permanent, structural repairs and sanitation. Steps taken to discourage and exclude crickets will serve the same function for all the other occasional invaders as well and may even yield energy savings.

USE INSECTICIDES WITH CARE. READ THE LABEL DIRECTIONS. FOLLOW ALL SAFETY PRECAUTIONS.

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