Home and Horticultural PESTS

Crickets

Crickets normally live and breed outdoors. Out of sight during the summer, they gather on sun-warmed buildings and homes as cooler fall weather approaches. With dropping temperatures, crickets seek heat where it escapes through structural cracks, crevices, and gaps. Eventually they enter buildings and homes through these openings. The chirping mating calls of males signals arrival.

True Crickets

Field Cricket *Gryllus spp.*

Several field cricket species are found in Kansas. In general, they are entirely black (*Figure 1*) or mostly black with brownish coppery highlights (*Figure 2*). Females are larger than males with three conspicuous appendages at the tip of the abdomen: two lateral styli and a distinctive ovipositor. Males possess only two lateral styli. Field crickets are outdoor species that overwinter as eggs in the soil. Nymphs emerge the following spring and develop over the summer. By early fall when they reach maturity, they mate. Females deposit eggs in the soil and produce a single generation per year. Field crickets consume a wide range of food sources. They might be considered scavengers because they feed on plant debris and other organic refuse including dead insects. Crickets are also plant-eaters, capable of destroying field and vegetable crops when populations reach outbreak proportions.

Field crickets vary in color from black Figure 1 (top) to brown Figure 2 (bottom).

House Cricket

Acheta domesticus

House crickets'color varies from yellowish-brown to straw-brown to light tan in color (*Figure 3*). When outdoors, house and field crickets have similar developmental patterns and feeding habits. But unlike field crickets, which eventually die after moving indoors, house crickets may adapt to their new surroundings to live and breed indefinitely — hence the name, house cricket. Lacking soil, females seek darkened areas where they deposit eggs in cracks or crevices. House crickets subsist on a variety of food sources including houseplants; meat and vegetable matter; pet food in feeding dishes, bags, or boxes; dead insect carcasses; and other organic materials. Because house crickets can breed and live indoors, they are produced commercially for specialty markets. Traditionally, they have been sold through pet stores and bait shops. They are also sold for human consumption.

Figure 3. House cricket

Minute Ground Cricket

Nemobius fasciatus

This cricket looks typical, but at less than ½-inch long it is actually quite small. (*Figure 4*). Color varies from black to brownish to reddish-brown. Ground crickets normally live in fields and wooded areas where they feed much the same as field crickets. Ground crickets are attracted to light on warm summer nights.

You may notice them crawling on the sidewalk or pavement under street lights and in front of lighted storefronts and businesses. They seek cover in dwellings as daylight returns.

Figure 4. Ground cricket

Non-Cricket "Crickets"

Camel Cricket *Ceuthophilus* spp

Camel crickets, also called cave crickets, are named for their humped appearance (*Figure 5*). They are wingless, possess long antennae, and have powerful hind jumping legs. Camel crickets are not true crickets. Rather, they are more closely related to long-horned and meadow grasshoppers and katydids. Most people probably do not encounter camel crickets because during the day they remain hidden in underground burrows, beneath soil litter, in wood piles, and near wells or other sites that protect them from sunlight. Camel crickets are active at night. Some are predators that feed on what they capture. Others are herbivores that consume plants. Camel crickets occasionally enter homes. They may be a nuisance but do not cause damage. In rare cases when populations are high, burrowing can cause lumpy lawns. The rough surface makes walking difficult and may dull reel mower blades.

Figure 5. Cave cricket

Northern Mole Cricket

Neocurtillia hexadactyla

Mole crickets (*Figure 6*) are not true crickets. They belong to their own taxonomic group. Although not rare, the northern mole cricket is seldom seen in Kansas. As the name implies, mole crickets spend most of their lives in underground burrows. Their mole-like front legs enable them to dig passageways. Northern mole crickets forage on underground plant material such as grass roots, plant roots, root crops, and tubers. They are occasionally found on the soil surface and have been reported feeding on strawberries. In the home, the mole cricket's size (up to 1½ inches long) and unusual appearance raises concerns. Mole crickets do not cause damage indoors.

Figure 6. Mole cricket

Damage in Homes

Indoors, crickets may cause other problems:

- **Incessant chirping.** This can be distracting and interfere with rest or sleep.
- **Fabric damage.** While crickets do not consume fabrics, they sample whatever they come in contact with. Random chewing may damage articles made of leather, wool, fur, cotton, silk, synthetic fabrics, linen, paper, and even rubber. Chewing damage is more likely on fabrics, materials or clothing soiled with food or perspiration.
- **Stains.** Salivary secretions may damage light fabrics.
- **Food contamination.** Cricket fecal pellets contaminate food in meal preparation areas including food left out on counters, especially overnight when it is dark and quiet.

Cricket Control

Non-chemical

While crickets are hardy insects and don't necessarily require dark and damp shelter for survival, they do seek hiding places. Habitat modification around the perimeter of buildings and homes helps reduce cricket numbers. Removal of weeds and dense vegetation reduces protective cover. Getting rid of loose bricks, boards, wood piles, tarpaulins and other miscellaneous materials or debris eliminates hiding places. Consider removing crushed stone, wood chip mulch, and plastic weed control barriers next to foundations.

Try to insect-proof buildings and houses by thoroughly inspecting to identify entry points. Check for cracks and gaps in structure foundations, ill-fitting doorways (between garage doors and the building structures, for example), overhang louvers, chimney vents, roof ductways, soffits, air conditioner connections, outdoor faucets and siding. Use caulk to seal cracks and crevices, weather stripping to make doorways and garage doors tight-fitting, and metal screening over or under other entrances.

Chemical

Outdoor insecticide barrier treatments can be applied to a 6- to12-foot band around the perimeter of buildings and homes. Spraying sides of structures is a further deterrent. Used in combination with non-chemical recommendations, insecticides can further reduce cricket numbers before they enter.

Indoor insecticide applications can be proactive – applied when cricket populations are large and there is likelihood of home invasion – or reactive – to eliminate crickets after they have entered. Indoor applications may be general surface, spot, mist or crack and crevice treatments. Because various insecticide active ingredients registered for use against crickets are marketed under numerous trade names, shop around to determine what products are available through local retail outlets. Read product labels to ensure safe and proper use.

Labels should tell whether or not a product is restricted to outdoor or indoor use or if it can be used in both situations. It should also describe areas suitable for treatment, application methods, mixture rates for products that are not premixed, safety precautions for people and pets, and precautions to avoid staining or damaging sprayed surfaces.

Product Ingredients and Uses

		Use Site		
Active Ingredient	No. Products registered in Kansas	Lawn	Perimeter and other surfaces	Indoor
bifenthrin	118	X		
carbaryl	82		X	
cyfluthrin	98	X	X	X
cypermethrin	61		X	X
deltamethrin	71	X	X	X
esfenvalerate	55		X	X
lambda-cyhalothrin	43	X	X	X
permethrin	764	X	X	X

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