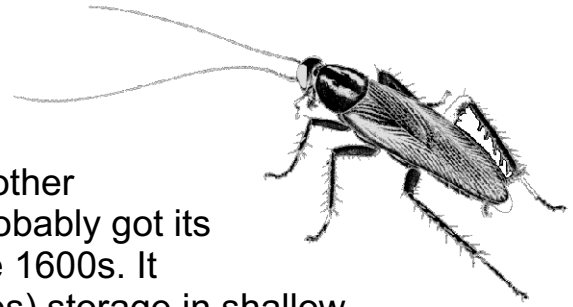


We know a lot about the German cockroach—its history, distribution genetics, biology, behavior. We know more about this insect than we do about any other household or structural pest. It probably got its start as a pest in south Asia in the 1600s. It moved from makeshift food (spices) storage in shallow caves in Malaysia, to dockside warehouses, and then on to Dutch and Portuguese ships bound for Europe. It was a warehouse and household pest in Europe by the 1700s—and got its name, *Blattella germanica* in 1758 (the original specimens came from Germany, thus *germanica*). It lives and thrives on the various foods in our kitchens: sugars and other carbohydrates, and protein. Naturally, when it came to designing (toxic) bait for this pest, the ingredients included sugar because it acts as a feeding stimulant—and it is something all animals need to survive. We need it for energy. Glucose is broken down in the body and used to fuel everything from cells, muscles, and organs.



“I have a thought that ... the cockroach may have painted itself into a corner”

Bill Robinson

Following several years of successful use of baits, there developed the phenomenon called ‘bait aversion’. Some German cockroach populations (those that had long exposure to bait) were avoiding bait placements. After some head scratching and good science, it was determined that individuals in these populations were put off by the sugar in the bait—they were avoiding the glucose. So, glucose was replaced by fructose (another sugar); that worked for a while, but eventually avoidance developed to this sugar; so then maltose (another sugar) was used as a replacement, and more problems. The final solution seems to be to increase the amount of insecticide in the bait so that contact or eating less of it will provide control. Fine, but there is a deeper question here: how does any animal stop intake of the universal energy source and not pay a penalty? What were they thinking?

If an animal shuns the most common and vital food group: sugars, what does it do for energy? It can break down protein and get some energy benefit, but that means it must spend more energy finding more protein. I have a thought that, while we have been battling this cockroach for a long time, it may have painted itself into a corner. Maybe there is a way out...but science tells us that you can't go back, there are no genetic do-overs. Once aversion is in the population, it stays there...until those cockroaches pay the ultimate penalty and don't do well. In the mean time, sanitation can be a weapon in cockroach control...get the meat off the table.

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BBM Pest Control
Hollywood, FL

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