
Madagascar Hissing Cockroach

Gromphoderhina portentosa

Class: *Insecta*

Order: *Blattodea*

Family: *Blaberidae*

Characteristics: L. 2-4 in; Wt. 0.8 oz. Head, thorax, abdomen and six legs with shiny brown, oval-shaped, orange markings on abdomen. No wings; single pair of antennae. Males sport large horns. Sexually dimorphic – males larger, shaped differently. Exhale air through breathing holes (spiracles) which makes hissing sound used in reproduction, communication and as an effective alarm cry. Can survive high doses of radiation and live for a week without its head. May die from dehydration.

Behavior: Live in large colonies. Male dominates several females. Active at night scavenging for detritus. Males use horns in aggressive encounters. Rivals ram one another with horns unleashing hisses. Winning roaches hiss more than losers. Communicate involves touching, hearing, pheromones and four different hisses.

Reproduction: Breeding season year around but mating occurs only when climate is warm. Male circles female hissing and touching her antenna. Will mate rear to rear for 20-30 minutes. Female creates a cocoon-like egg case called an ootheca and carries eggs {and neonatal nymphs) inside her body 60 days at which time 15-40 cockroach babies, called nymphs, will emerge. Nymphs stay with mother for about 6 months after hatching. Will molt six times until mature in seven months.

Diet:

Wild: Detrivores. Scavenge for decaying fruit, dead animal matter. Also organic matter including glue, paper, cloth, electrical wire insulation.
Zoo: Carrots, potatoes, apples.

Conservation: Not listed by IUCN. Found only in Madagascar where research is difficult due to sparse passable roads and political turmoil. Habitat dying by degradation and fragmentation. Sold commercially in pet trade.

FYI: Predators include birds, mammals, reptiles, amphibians.

99% are not household pests. They do not inhabit human dwellings.

Known as the battle tank of the cockroach world because of its hard, thin exoskeleton or skin.



Range & Habitat:

Hollow logs, leaf litter, rotting wood in tropical jungles and in caves only on the island of Madagascar



Lifespan: up to 5 years in captivity, Up to 5 years in the wild.

Special Adaptations: Have lived 350 million years due to uncanny ability to exploit a changing environment.

IUCN Conservation Status:
NE (Not Evaluated)

