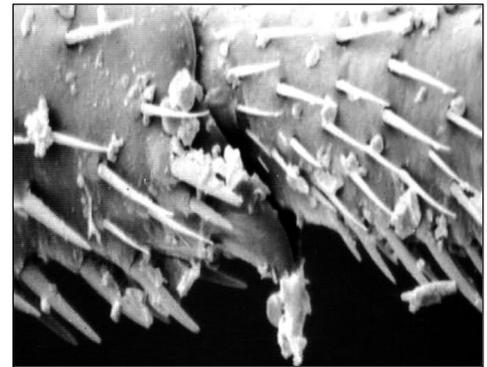




Dust and dusters are not coming back—they never left, but they have gotten a lot better. Dust definitely has a place in modern pest management programs, and there are new dusts and dust applicators to get you there. We tend to forget about using dust and the long-term control it can provide. Maybe all you need is a refresher on how dust insecticides work.

Less-is-more when it comes to applying dust. The goal is a thin layer (a dusting!) on surfaces in wall voids, behind cabinets and under sinks. Any more than a thin layer can act as a repellent or even a barrier to crawling insects—and that defeats the whole purpose of dusting. Modern dust formulations are designed to cling to surfaces and to the feet (tarsi), legs, and antennae of insects walking on them. Once a small amount of the insecticide dust gets on them, the end is near. Remember this about dust, it is a concentrated form of active ingredient, so it doesn't take much to kill the target.



Grooming is an automatic behavior for all insects, it's hard wired. Think of grooming as the intermittent setting on a windshield wiper—every so many seconds or minutes they swipe, and you can adjust the interval. Grooming is like this; every so many minutes the antennae and legs are drawn through the mouthparts for cleaning. Whatever is on these parts, especially on the pads of their feet, will get into the mouth and eventually into their gut. If that happens to be a small amount of dust, well...the end is near.

Dusts rely on the insect to do some of their work, and grooming is key to this process. Dust insecticide gets into insects through the pads on their feet (by walking on dusted surfaces) and into the mouth/gut through grooming antennae and legs. Here's how it works for German cockroaches: typically, they clean their legs (primarily the front legs) once every 4 minutes, and clean their antennae once every minute. The grooming pattern changes when they walk into a treated harborage. Leg grooming decreases slightly, but antennal grooming increases to about 3 times per minute. This keeps the antennae clean, but it can introduce the insecticide that clings to the antennae directly into the mouth. Because of this 'direct introduction' of insecticide, dusts generally kill insects quicker than exposure to the residue of liquid insecticide.

Short antennae. Perhaps you've looked at German cockroaches on sticky traps and noticed that some have one antenna shorter than the other. How does that happen? When the antennae pass through the mouthparts for cleaning, the mandibles chew the dirt off—and sometimes the chewing gets too strong for the small segments at the end, and oops, they bite off the end of their antennae.

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