

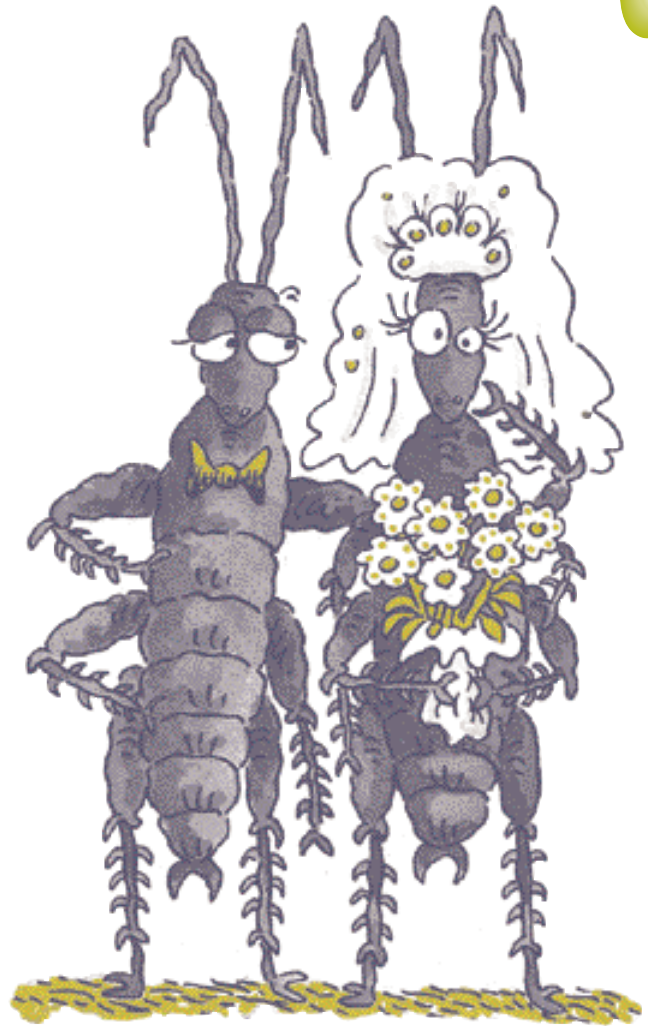
what to have for dinner by sticking your tootsies in your food. Well, that's what roaches do. If they like what they've stepped in—if it tickles their toe-tastebuds—then it's time to dine. Of course, just about everything tastes good to a roach!

But roaches do more than just eat and bathe. They know how to have a good time. When they're not busy eating or cleaning themselves up, they're out looking for romance. One little cockroach finds a mate, has babies, those babies have babies, and those babies have babies. At the end of a year, there could be about 10 million new cockroaches as a result of one romantic evening. (But don't worry. That would happen only if *all* the babies survive and reproduce. They won't.) And for a real baby factory, no one can beat the German cockroach. One mom can produce about 500,000 tykes a year! That's a lot of birthday cake!

Gross but Good

Believe it or not, roaches are perfect for experimenting with. Doctors use them to study heart disease. Cancer docs use them because roaches grow tumors kind of like the ones that humans get. Even the nerve cells of the roach brain have a lot in common with ours, and, thanks to those cocky little fellows, many neat discoveries have been made that help to explain how our brains work.

Scientists at the University of Tokyo plucked the wings off of a bunch of roaches, inserted little electrodes in their antennae, and stuck on tiny backpacks full of electric circuits and batteries. They discovered that they could then steer the bugs like a car. Hang a left. Turn right. Stop. Go. The point? They hope to use roaches in rescue work, such as in collapsed buildings, by mounting tiny cameras on their backs. Next thing you know, they'll be getting tiny Congressional Medals of Honor!



GOOD RIDDANCE TO ROACHES

So how *do* you get rid of the little creeps? You can't stomp on all of them. There are way too many. But short of filling your house with clouds of poisonous gas, here are some environmentally friendly ways to say "bye-bye" to those bugs.

* The Environmental Protection Agency is looking into allowing folks to use "roach motels" that are filled with parasitic worms, harmless to humans but death to a roach. They invade the roach's body and release a toxic bacteria that kills it. Then, after all the roaches are eaten, the worms die because roaches are the only thing they'll eat!