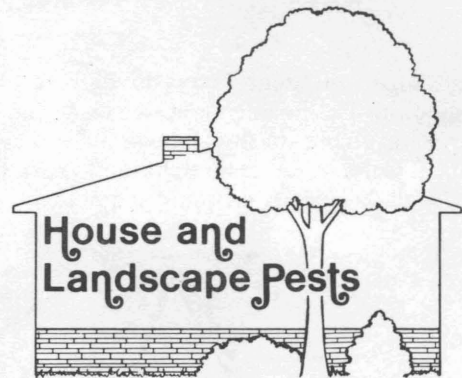


# CRICKETS

James F. Leser\*



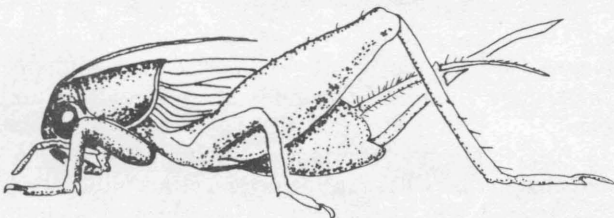
Crickets are general feeders on plants and normally live and breed outdoors. They can damage garden plants and be a real nuisance inside a home. Usually only a few will be found in the home, but sometimes outbreaks result in large numbers entering buildings. Crickets are attracted to lights and enter houses when searching for hiding and hibernating places or when grasses and moist areas dry out.

## Description, Biology and Habits

Of the several species of crickets, the field cricket and house cricket are the most common and troublesome. Camel, mole and Jerusalem crickets sometimes become pests.

### Field and House Crickets

Both of these crickets have antennae longer than the body and are good jumpers and fliers. Males have two appendages and females have three extending from the tip of the abdomen. The house cricket is



light yellowish-brown with three dark bands on the head. The adult is about  $\frac{3}{4}$  inch long. Field crickets range in length from  $\frac{9}{16}$  to slightly more than 1 inch and are usually dark brown to black.

Field crickets lay as many as 150 to 400 eggs in the soil. These hatch into nymphs that complete their development in about 12 weeks. In cold winter areas there is generally one generation a year. But, there may be as many as three generations per year in southern areas. Field crickets overwinter mostly as eggs in the north and as nymphs in the warmer

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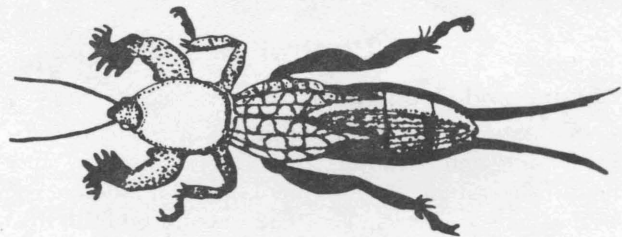
southern regions. These crickets prefer to live and breed outdoors where they feed on several kinds of plants. Occasionally, they invade homes in search of warm hiding places but will not breed or establish a permanent infestation indoors.

House crickets commonly breed outdoors but, unlike field crickets, can live and breed indefinitely indoors. They lay from 40 to 170 eggs, deposited singly in dark places such as cracks and crevices or behind baseboards. Eggs hatch in about 10 weeks and the nymphs develop into adults 7 weeks after hatching. Hiding in warm, dark places during the day, house crickets come out at night to feed.

House and field crickets are primarily pests and their chirping can be annoying. Outdoors, they damage garden plants. Indoors, crickets can damage woolens, cottons, silks, synthetic fabrics, furs and carpeting. Clothes stained with perspiration are particularly attractive. They also feed on foods, leather and rubber products.

### Mole Crickets

Mole crickets resemble miniature moles because of their large, shovel-like front legs that are adapted for digging. Adults are about 1 to 2 inches long and usually are brown or black. They are weak fliers and

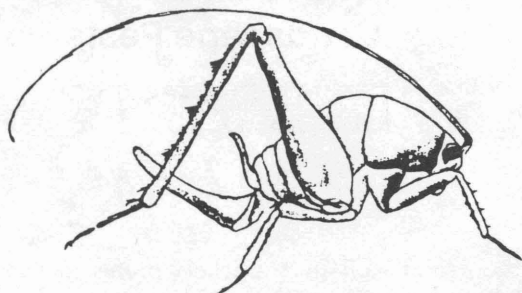


poor jumpers. Mole crickets spend most of their time in burrows in the soil, coming to the surface when the soil is wet or flooded by rains. During wet, rainy periods they occasionally enter basements of dwellings. Their burrowing habits sometimes cause problems in turf.

### Camel Crickets

Also called stone or cave crickets, camel insects are not true crickets and are wingless, have long

antennae and long, well-developed hind legs for jumping. The head is bent downward and the back is arched, giving these insects a hump-backed appearance. Color varies from light tan to dark brown, often with darker bands on some segments.



Camel crickets are active at night and live in cool, damp, dark areas. They frequently are found under logs and rocks and occasionally invade damp basements. These crickets overwinter as adults or nymphs and lay eggs in the spring. Camel crickets have no "song" and are not attracted to lights.

### Jerusalem Crickets

The Jerusalem cricket is sometimes called "child of the earth" because its large, round, naked head with two bead-like, black eyes gives it a fancied resemblance to a miniature child. Adults vary in length from 1¼ to 2 inches with the head, thorax and legs colored pale yellow to brown. The upper surface of the abdomen is amber brown with wide, blackish bands. They are wingless and have large, stout legs with spines at their tips.

Jerusalem crickets are active at night and seldom seen. They burrow into loose soil, especially under rocks and boards, using the head and legs. They are useful predators, feeding on other insects and spiders. Although fierce looking, they are harmless. Their powerful mandibles could inflict a minor, nonvenomous wound if handled carelessly.

## Control

### Cultural and Mechanical

Sanitation is an important means of reducing cricket feeding and breeding sites. Eliminate weeds and dense vegetation around the house foundation, as well as piles of bricks, stones, wood and other debris where crickets hide. If trash dumps are a breeding

source for large cricket populations, a 6-inch layer of soil will destroy and prevent these infestations. Insect-proof your home by caulking, weatherstripping or filling in all openings and cracks. Make sure all screens and doors are tight-fitting. Reduce nightlights when infestations are large.

### Chemical

*Indoors.* Apply residual sprays to baseboards, in closets, under stairways and wherever cricket hiding places are found, Table 1. Applications should be restricted to damp areas when only mole or camel crickets are present or basement and ground level floors when field crickets are involved.

*Outdoors.* Control of crickets outside buildings is necessary only to prevent them from moving outdoors. Sprays applied to foundation walls, window wells, crawl spaces, door thresholds and under garbage cans should eliminate troublesome infestations, Table 1.

**Table 1. Suggested insecticides for cricket control**

Insecticide	Indoors	Outdoors
chlorpyrifos (Dursban®)	X	X
dichlorvos (Vapona®)	X	
diazinon	X	X
malathion	X (premium grade)	X
propoxur (Baygon®)	X	X
pyrethrins	X	
resmethrin	X	X
ronnel	X	
carbaryl (Sevin®)		X (bait)
metaldehyde		X (bait)

When infestations are large, treat a 5- to 20-foot swath around the house. Even this may not prevent crickets from invading buildings when migrations are heavy. Care should be used when treating outdoors since some chemicals and rates of application injure plants.

Insecticide label clearances are subject to change and changes may have occurred since this publication was printed. The pesticide USER is always responsible for the effects of pesticides on his own plants or household goods as well as problems caused by drift from his property to other properties or plants. *Always read and follow carefully the instructions on the container label.*

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