

Thousands of hissing cockroaches seized in Australia

8th June 2026



Customs officials in Australia have seized more than 100,000 cockroaches that were being smuggled into the country. Included in the seizure were thousands of Madagascar hissing cockroaches. These are giant

insects that can be as large as the palm of a person's hand. There was also a large number of dubia cockroaches. The value of the confiscated bugs was around \$143,000. Authorities said it was the largest ever seizure of illegal invertebrates. An environment spokesperson warned potential roach breeders: "If you are found to possess, breed or trade exotic cockroaches...they will be seized and you could face penalties under federal law."

The seized cockroaches were probably imported to be fed to pet reptiles. Professional snake catcher Stefanie Lesser said the roaches were more "cost-effective" than feeding lizards smaller bugs. Ms Lesser added that the roaches could have become an invasive species and caused a lot of harm to indigenous creatures like crickets, which birds rely on. She said: "If they got out and they had a disease on them, they could potentially wipe out all the crickets." She told the Australian Broadcasting Corporation that if diseased cockroaches entered the food chain, they could "potentially wipe out a whole lot of native animals". Sadly, the impounded bugs will be killed and disposed of by authorities.

Sources: abc.net.au / yahoo.com / bbc.com

Writing

All countries should wipe out their invasive species. Discuss.

Chat

Talk about these words from the article.

customs officials / Australia / cockroaches / Madagascar / bugs / exotic / penalties / pets / reptiles / snakes / lizards / invasive species / food chain / native animals

True / False

- 1) Officials in Australia stopped 100,000 from entering the country. T / F
- 2) Many of the cockroaches were as big as the palm of our hand. T / F
- 3) One of the exotic cockroaches was valued at \$143,000. T / F
- 4) Authorities said they found the largest invertebrate they'd ever seen. T / F
- 5) It is probable the cockroaches were to become pet food for reptiles. T / F
- 6) A snake catcher said the cockroaches could have killed many snakes. T / F
- 7) The snake catcher said the cockroaches could have killed all crickets. T / F
- 8) The cockroaches are now on a plane back to Madagascar. T / F

Synonym Match

(The words in **bold** are from the news article.)

- | | |
|------------------------|----------------------|
| 1. seized | a. native |
| 2. smuggled | b. non-native |
| 3. breed | c. destroy |
| 4. exotic | d. rear |
| 5. penalties | e. brought illegally |
| 6. harm | f. exterminated |
| 7. indigenous | g. confiscated |
| 8. wipe out | h. thrown away |
| 9. killed | i. punishments |
| 10. disposed of | j. damage |

Discussion – Student A

- a) What do you think about what you read?
- b) What do you think of cockroaches?
- c) What experiences do you have of cockroaches?
- d) What can governments do to combat invasive species?
- e) What invasive species are in there in your country?
- f) What damage do invasive species do to ecosystems?
- g) Do you think the seized cockroaches should be killed?
- h) What questions would you like to ask a cockroach expert?

Phrase Match

- | | |
|---------------------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| 1. customs officials | a. trade exotic cockroaches |
| 2. be as large as the palm | b. species |
| 3. The value of the confiscated bugs was | c. and disposed of |
| 4. possess, breed or | d. of a person's hand |
| 5. you could face penalties under | e. out all the crickets |
| 6. cockroaches were probably imported to | f. federal law |
| 7. invasive | g. chain |
| 8. they could potentially wipe | h. in Australia |
| 9. if diseased cockroaches entered the food | i. around \$143,000 |
| 10. the impounded bugs will be killed | j. be fed to pet reptiles |

Discussion – Student B

- What do you know about cockroaches?
- What do think of a palm-sized cockroach?
- What should happen to people who smuggle insects?
- How do you feel about a cockroach making a hissing sound?
- What are your favourite insects?
- What good do cockroaches do?
- How would you feel if all insects were giant sized?
- Do you think insects are good pets?

Spelling

- customs faficisol in Australia
- being eudlgmgs into the country
- the value of the ifoaesnctcd bugs
- seizure of illegal beatetisrnr
- breed or trade coitxe cockroaches
- you could face penalties under edaelrf law
- be fed to pet letpsrei
- roaches were more cost-eetifcevf
- become an vsivinae species
- caused a lot of harm to gnuiiesndo creatures
- wipe out a whole lot of avneti animals
- podside of by authorities

Answers – Synonym Match

1. g	2. e	3. d	4. b	5. i
6. j	7. a	8. c	9. f	10. h

Comprehension Questions

Listen to / read the news article. Answer these questions. (Answers are on p. 27 of the 27-page PDF.)

1.	Who seized more than 100,000 cockroaches in Australia?
2.	How big can Madagascar hissing cockroaches be?
3.	What was the value of the confiscated insects?
4.	Who warned potential cockroach breeders?
5.	Under what law could breeders face penalties?
6.	What might the cockroaches have become food for?
7.	Who said the giant cockroaches were cost-effective as food?
8.	What relies on crickets for food?
9.	What could it be damaging for the cockroaches to enter?
10.	What will happen to the cockroaches?

Speaking – Giant Creatures

Rank these with your partner. Put the most terrifying one-metre-long creatures at the top. Change partners often and share your rankings.

- | | |
|---------------|--------------|
| • Cockroaches | • Tarantula |
| • Hornets | • Leeches |
| • Earthworms | • Centipedes |
| • Fleas | • Ants |

Answers – True False

1	T	2	T	3	F	4	F	5	T	6	F	7	T	8	F
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Answers to Phrase Match and Spelling are in the text.