

Wasps and Hornet Fact Sheet

By Mark Weaver, BCE



Yellow Jacket Worker

The term hornet, wasp, and yellowjacket all refer to wasps. The term hornet is given to the group of wasps that build exterior paper nests, including the ones over a foot in diameter and shaped like a football. Yellowjackets are also paper nest making wasps, but prefer to nest inside hollow spaces such as in the ground, or in a wall. They will mold the nest to the shape of the hollow space. And because yellowjackets many times nest inside of walls, they can easily end up inside the home, especially during the Fall when the nest is largest, and the weather is cooler.

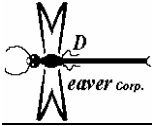
Another group of wasps that are common around dwellings are the mud daubers. These wasps are much less threatening than the paper wasps, although their large and sometimes purplish black appearance can be very intimidating. They are solitary wasps and do not live in nests, but rather form vertical mud like strips on such surfaces as the side of a building in which the young larvae develop. There are other types of wasps as well, but the paper wasps cause the most concern.

Honey bees appear more "fuzzy" than wasps, and are a drab yellow. Honey bee colonies do not die in the Winter, the colony is present all

year long. If nesting in a building, they should be relocated if possible and not harmed. They are very beneficial as pollinators. A honey bee nest should also be removed after the colony is removed so that honey is not left to decay and become rancid.

Wasp Biology:

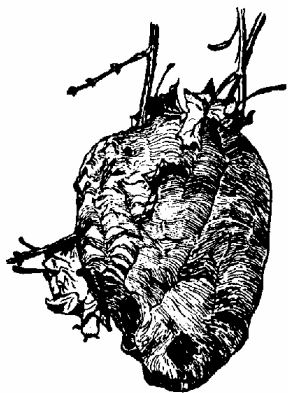
Unlike honey bees, the wasp colony dies off in the Fall with the exception of the Queens. After mating the queens retreat to a sheltered place, such as an attic or crawl space to spend the Winter. With the Spring comes another cycle where the queen begins a new colony. By Fall the nest can number many thousand. If there is a yellowjacket nest inside of a wall cavity, it is very important that it be exterminated. Otherwise the dispersing individuals may end up inside a structure, causing havoc. A yellowjacket colony can approach 20 thousand in number. This is quite a contrast to the bald faced hornet that lives in exposed paper nests of 200 to 800 in number. The yellowjackets are most easily provoked, and wasps in general are most aggressive when they have been bothered or tormented. The africanized honey bee has not made its appearance in the Northeast as yet but may in the future. The appearance is very similar to that of the european honey bee although more aggressive in nature.



Control and Prevention:

Although Wasp stings may cause a life threatening reaction to some people, having them too close for comfort is a problem for everybody. There are no simple solutions to insulating your premises from these insects, and the answer lies in using many techniques.

Deterrence is one of the most effective strategies in wasp control. Unlike honey bees, wasps are carnivorous, and to a lesser extent pollinate. Clean and cover barbecue grills when not in use. The yellow light bulbs are designed to attract less flying insects than the regular use bulbs. Use these so that beetles, moths, and other insects, do not collect at night for the wasps foragers the next morning. Flowers adjacent to walkways and patios should be kept to a minimum, and preferably kept at least ten feet from these areas. Wasps frequent the outside of entrances in the morning where night lights have resulted in a collection of dead insects. It is vital that a barbecue grill left outside be thoroughly cleaned with no food residue remaining, and cleaning the grill can help



Bald-Faced Hornet Nest

remove the attractive smell of the grease left behind. In order to reduce the chances of wasps entering the house, one should first make sure there are no nests on or near the building. The sooner these are taken care of the fewer wasps there



Honey Bee

will be to deal with. To help prevent their nesting in a building, all vents should have screens, and trim boards should fit tightly. All wasp nests should be addressed early on before developing into a larger colony. In addition, the application of a repellent insecticide, such as the pyrethroid variety can reduce the number of nesting sites on the home. Fogging an attic is also a remedy. For best control, wasp nests discovered should be treated directly with a contact residual insecticide. A professional pest

control company will use a dust formulation with residual applied with special equipment to treat large nests.

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