

# Wasps

## Advice leaflet about Wasps

Wasps, and more particularly the social wasp, are mainly known for their nuisance value, particularly in the autumn. The combination of the cooler weather and a diet of fermenting fruit juices makes them irritable, and therefore more likely to sting.

### Appearance

There are several species of social wasp found in this country, but all are similar in appearance. They are all bright yellow and black, about 10 - 20 mm in length, except for the hornet, which is somewhat larger and brown and yellow in colour. They have a very slim waist and are a lot less hairy than bees.

### Life Cycle

The only wasps that can survive the winter are the young fertilised queens. A queen will emerge from her winter hibernation around mid-April, and find a suitable site for her new nest. In nature, this will be on a branch or inside a hollow tree, or underground. Unfortunately, a loft space, wall cavity or shed will do just as well!

The queen then builds the first cell to the new nest herself using chewed wood pulp, and lays between 10 and 20 eggs. She then feeds the resulting larvae until they emerge as workers, and take over the tasks of enlarging the nest and providing food for the subsequent larvae, which mainly consists of other insects.

The adults satisfy their craving for sweet foods by drinking a sugary secretion produced by the larvae.

The nest will usually grow to the size of a football and will be home to about 5000 individuals, but in some cases can be quite a bit larger. In the late summer, a generation of males and young queens emerge. They mate, and the queens seek a place to hibernate. The other wasps will gradually die off as the weather cools, and the cycle starts again the next spring.

### How can wasps nests be controlled?

Individual wasps that enter a house or other property can be dealt with by using an ordinary flying insect spray. It is also advisable to avoid leaving sweet sticky foods around which could attract wasps to them.

If a nest is in a place where it gives cause for concern there are a number of proprietary products available to kill the nest. Whichever product you use, you are advised to read the label and follow the instructions carefully, taking all necessary precautions.

You should also consider the risk of being stung. Whilst for most people this is a painful annoyance, there is a significant minority who are allergic to the stings, and can suffer very extreme reactions. Also, if the nest is in a place where a ladder is necessary to gain access to it, you should take extra care.

It is probably better to delay any treatment until the cooler part of the day, preferably about dusk, as it is most likely that all the adults will have returned to the nest, and they will be very much less active. Even without treatment a nest can only last one season.

## **Local Authority**

If you do not wish to try to deal with a nest yourself, the Environmental Health Department does offer a service, although there is a charge for this. If you would like a Pest Control Officer to visit to treat the nest, please telephone the department on **01799 510370** to make an appointment. A fixed standard charge is made to cover this service. In some cases, our professional staff can treat a nest in as little as 10 minutes, but the charge is based on the average time required to eradicate the wasp problem and includes travel, provision of vehicles, equipment, training and insecticides. Also should the initial treatment be unsuccessful within two weeks one further treatment will be carried out to the same nest at no extra cost.

**We accept the following credit/debit cards: VISA, VISA DELTA, MASTERCARD, SWITCH. Please have your details ready when requesting an appointment.**

All products used by the Council are approved for use on domestic and commercial premises under the Control of Pesticides Regulations 1986.

Alternatively, there are a number of private pest control companies that will also do this work, and you can find more details from the local telephone directory.