

Wasps



Description

- Wasps have the characteristic black and yellow bands and have a narrow waist in the middle of the body.
- They vary in size from the workers which are about 15 mm (6/10 of an inch) in length to the queen which is 20 mm (3/4 of an inch) long and they have two pairs of wings which lock together.
- The needle-like sting is possessed only by females and is concealed near the tip of the abdomen.



Life Cycle

- In April, queen wasps emerge from their winter hibernation in lofts, sheds or other frost free areas.
- Each queen will construct a small nest of a papery substance made from chewed wood fibres.
- Each nest will be about the size of a golf ball and may be in a loft, air brick or similar sheltered situation
- About 15 eggs are laid inside and the resulting grubs are fed on insects caught by the queen. At the end of May, these new workers will be fully developed and they then help by feeding the next generation of grubs, enlarging the nest and protecting the colony.
- Towards the end of the summer the queen lays a number of eggs which produce male wasps and these mate with the new queens. As the weather becomes colder, in the autumn, all the wasps die except the new queens which fly away to find hibernation sites. The old nests are not re-colonised the following year although a new nest may be established next to an existing nest. There is no need, therefore, to remove an old nest.
- Where the nest is in a warm place, such as next to a central heating pipe, the nest may remain active well into the start of winter.

Wasp Stings

Wasps will sting if provoked. The pain of a wasp sting is caused by a toxic venom which is injected through the needle like sting. Individuals react differently to stings; some people suffer little whilst others suffer considerable pain and swelling. The usual treatment is washing with soap and water then applying something cold to reduce the swelling. Unfortunately none of the well known remedies give much relief although some specific remedies are available from chemists. Some people are especially sensitive to wasp stings and anyone who is sensitive should always seek immediate help from a doctor if stung.

Control

If Where necessary, you can treat wasp nests yourself although care should obviously be taken in doing so. This can be done through the application of insecticidal dust at the entrance to the nest preferably after dusk when the wasps have returned to the nest and are less active. Wasps will then carry the insecticide into the nest, spreading it to other wasps in the colony. Insecticidal dust is available from most DIY stores and garden centres. You should make sure that the product you buy is specifically intended for wasps. The directions on the product label must always be followed. As old nests are not re-colonised, treated nests need not be removed. Do not use an ordinary aerosol fly spray on a large colony as it is not penetrating enough and can make the wasps act aggressively.

Spelthorne Borough Council provides a service for the treatment of wasp's nests. A charge is made for this service. Please contact Spelthorne Borough Customer Service on 01784 451499 or alternatively e-mail customer.services@spelthorne.gov.uk