

Wasps – Fact Sheet

What are they found?

Wasps are commonly found throughout the UK and Northern Europe. Like ants, they are social creatures forming colonies consisting of workers (infertile females), males and a queen. Hornets are part of the wasp family, and their life cycle is very much the same as wasps.



Where do they live

A wasp nest can be found anywhere, but roof spaces, cavity walls via air vents; rockeries, garden sheds; trees and bushes are favourite sites. Wasps build a new nest each year, with the colder months killing off workers and males. Only the young queens survive the winter to make new nests the following spring.

Why are wasps so aggressive?

Wasps cause a nuisance for several reasons. It is usually the late summer when the workers do not have to feed the larvae with high protein food, they can therefore indulge in sweet substances, fruit jams syrups etc. They enter kitchens and gardens in search of sweet foods and while not particularly hostile, they will sting if aggravated.

As the cooler weather comes, the wasp become more irritable, this is not helped by them feeding on over-ripe fruit, giving them the appearance of being 'tipsy'. Again they are better left alone when in this condition.

Earlier in the year (June) the only nuisance caused by wasps is very minor damage to wooden fences, sheds and trees when the workers are using the small amounts of wood shavings to build the nest.

Do wasps cause any real harm?

Wasps do have a role to play by feeding on the larvae of other insects, controlling gardens pests such as aphids, and clearing carcasses of other insect early in the season. However, wasps may carry diseases picked up during their visits to refuse bins, bottle banks, and carcasses and therefore can contaminate food if allowed to settle.

You will notice a possible nesting site by lots of activity around a hole, under the gutter/soffit box or other such area.

A wasps sting is caused by the injection of a toxic poison called 'histamine', which causes a reaction in our system, by irritation, redness and swelling. In some cases more serious effects can occur, should a severe reaction take place then seek immediate medical advice.

How do I get rid of them

You may be able to dispose of individual wasps using an aerosol spray, but this will not control or eliminate the colony itself. Ideally the whole nest should be destroyed. This can be achieved with great caution or it is far safer to use pest control experts (this is a chargeable service) by calling the City Council's Pest Control Team on;

Bristol City Council Pest Control
FREEPOST BS 4341, PO Box
595, Bristol, BS99 2BR
Tel 0117 922 2500
e-mail: pest.control@bristol.gov.uk