



## WASPS

### **LIFE CYCLE**

Wasps are nest builders; they belong to an order known as Hymenoptera and have a very strong social system. Initially there are no males in the nest, just the queen; and the worker wasps who are sterile females. In late August or early September males and fertile females (next year's queens) will be formed. Mating takes place outside the nest after which the females will seek a suitable place for hibernation. The new queen wasps will emerge from hibernation in early spring and search for a suitable site to build her nest. Britain has six species of wasps and one species of hornet. Wasps are unmistakable in their yellow and black livery. Hornets are much larger than a wasp and are recognised by their yellow and brown markings and are quite rare. The common wasp (*vespula vulgaris*) and the German wasp (*vespula germanica*) are the two species that you are most likely to encounter.



The German wasp usually builds her nest in a tree, in a hedge or even in the ground, whereas the common wasp has a preference for buildings and will often build her nest in a shed, a loft or even behind facing tiles on an exterior wall. When she has chosen a suitable site the queen wasp will build the beginnings of a nest in which she will lay her eggs. She will tend the developing grubs until they emerge as first stage workers. After the emergence of these first workers the queen will stay in the nest and become nothing more than an egg-laying machine. The workers busy themselves with nest enlargement and collecting high protein food, which includes insects to feed to the developing grubs. In return the grubs exude a sugary secretion which is taken by the workers and is also a useful food supplement which helps break down the high protein foods that are feed to the larvae.

Throughout the summer months the colony will continue to expand until the emergence of male wasps and next year's queens. We have now come full circle and will see that with the passing of autumn and onset of winter the social structure of the nest is now in decline, the occupants will die and the nest will never be used again.



## **IMPORTANCE**

Besides being a hazard in bakeries and food production areas wasps can become a big problem in parks, gardens and around the home. They feed insects to the developing larvae, as well as high protein food which they will collect from fish, meat (including carrion), refuse bins, etc possibly picking up some harmful bacteria along the way. A sting from a wasp is not only very painful; it can also cause for some unfortunate people, anaphylactic shock that can prove fatal. Many a picnic or barbecue has been ruined by the activities of wasps, they are at their most aggressive when the social structure of their nest is in decline. Although fortunately rare, wasps have also been known to cause motoring accidents by flying in through open car windows causing the driver to panic.

## **NEST REMOVAL**

Destruction of the nest isn't always necessary, after all wasps in some respects are beneficial; they will kill insects to feed the developing grubs and in a small way can even be pollinators, their pest status will to some extent be dependent on the nest location. If treatment of the nest is considered necessary, it is important to remember that there are many dangers involved. The best advice that you can receive is **Call in the Professionals.**

If you require any further information please contact our Pest Control Department at the following address:

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