

WASPS - Pest Control Advice

Wasps are one of the most disliked groups of insects but fear is misplaced as wasps rarely sting unless they are aroused or frightened. They are beneficial in Spring and early Summer when they feed their grubs mainly on insects. From midsummer onwards, the worker wasps feed on ripening fruits. In late Autumn, flies and other protein foods are collected for feeding the last brood.

Description

Wasps have a narrow waist in the middle of the body. The needle-like sting possessed only by females is concealed near the tip of the abdomen. Workers or queens are produced according to their diet of the grubs. Workers are smaller than queens and never lay fertilised eggs. Male wasps, which are also smaller than queens, develop from unfertilised eggs laid by queens or workers.

There are two main species of wasps in Great Britain i.e. the common wasp and the German wasp both of which nest underground and cavities in trees, walls and roof voids.

Life Cycle

In Spring the queens leave their hibernating places and seek nesting sites. Having selected a site, the queen starts to build her nest with a papery material that she makes by chewing small pieces of wood mixed with saliva. The nest contains cells in which the eggs are placed, when the grubs hatch the queen feeds them until they are ready to hatch as wasps.

By July there are enough adult workers to take over duties of building the nest and feeding the grubs. Nest building continues until the colony may consist of many thousands of workers. During the Summer, males and young queens are produced; the fertilised young queens fly off to hibernate in dry protected places such as roof voids. Males and workers continue to be active until late Autumn when the nest eventually becomes unused and is rarely used the next year.

Wasp Stings

The pain of a wasp sting is caused by a toxic fluid which is injected through the needle like sting as it penetrates the victim's skin. Individuals react differently, some hardly affected, others suffer considerable pain and swelling.

Control Measures

Before the nest gets to the size of a tennis ball, it is possible for most people to deal with it themselves using an insecticidal wasp spray (you should follow the instructions carefully) and it is often best to attempt this at dusk when the wasps are likely to be less active. Once above this size, destruction of the nest normally requires specialist treatment. The Council's Environmental Services Division can provide this service for a fee. An appointment can be booked by telephoning 01293 438000.