

# European Wasp information sheet

The European wasp, *Vespula germanica*, is not native to Australia. It is the same size as the bee (10-15mm) however it is less hairy and folds its wings back at rest. The European wasps is most easily identifiable by:

- a bright yellow and black body
- yellow legs
- triangular markings on the abdomen

While the European wasp is the same size as the bee, queen European wasps have identical markings and colouring, except they are larger and can be up to 20mm.



Bee



European Wasp

## Wasp pest season

European Wasps are found in temperate climates in Australia such as South Australia. Activity of European wasps reduces during the cooler months, but in warmer areas they can remain active all year round (which is why their nests can get so large).

## Wasp prevention

Preventing wasps building their nests is the best form of control and can be achieved quite easily with some good home maintenance and the use of wasp control products.

To help prevent wasps:

- Trim back bushes and over-hanging branches from the perimeter of your home.
- Carry out regular inspections of the perimeter of your building and gardens for wasp activity and signs of early nest building, especially in spring.
- Ensure rubbish bins are closed and make sure that any composting is carried out in containers (European wasps often build their nests underground).
- European wasps eat protein (meat) but they are also highly attracted to sugary foods so ensure food is not left unattended, cover exposed food and use clear drink containers or a straw rather than drinking directly out of cans or bottles.
- Spray the boundary of your home.
- Avoid leaving uneaten pet food or dog bones outside.
- Keep your swimming pool covered when not in use.

## Control of individual wasps and wasp nests

European wasps generally travel 50-250m from their nest, but they can have a range of approximately 500m. If wasps are sighted, carefully check your property for a nest. It can be very difficult to see the actual nest as they are usually located either underground or in wall cavities. Most often, the only indication of their nest location is the steady stream of the wasps coming and going from the location. If you sight just one or two wasps on your property, they could be coming from a nest up to ½ a kilometre away.

- Council can not spray individual wasps, but can remove wasps nests located on your own property.
- If a European Wasp nest is located on your property, do not disturb the nest, either contact council or a pest control operator.
- For removal of individual wasps, standard aerosols are the best option. Make sure the wasp gets a good dose and importantly, quickly leave the area as they tend to get angry when sprayed. Wasp stings hurt and they can be dangerous!

Nests located 'on the wall' or 'hanging from a window sill' or similar that can be seen are unlikely to be a European Wasp nest as European wasp nests are located where shelter is available such as;

- underground nests
- retaining walls
- hollows of trees
- wall cavities.

Nests constructed of mud are not European wasp nests.

## What to do if you are stung

Wasps can STING repeatedly. The most common sting reaction results in fiery pain and red swelling.

- **Single wasp stings** can normally be treated by washing the sting area(s) with soap and water, applying an ice/cold pack to the sting to reduce swelling and pain, and keeping the wound clean and dry to prevent infection. Over-the-counter pain relievers, can also help manage pain.
- **Multiple wasp stings, stings to the face or neck, and stings to people that suffer from allergies** should seek medical help immediately.

The most severe allergic reactions to wasp stings are referred to as anaphylaxis. Anaphylaxis occurs when your body goes into shock in response to the wasp venom. Most people who go into shock after a wasp sting do so very quickly. It's important to seek immediate emergency care to treat anaphylaxis.

For information on first aid treatment and treatment for wasp stings, contact the Poisons Information Centre on 131 126.