



Wasp Information & Treatment Advice

What are Wasps?

True wasps, which include the domestic species, belong to the family Vespidae and can be recognised by their ability of folding their wings lengthwise when at rest. This family includes both social and solitary species. In the UK we have seven species of social wasps, of which the commonest are appropriately named the common wasp, *Vespa vulgaris*, and the German wasp, *Vespa Germanica*. Wasps can often be confused with other types of winged insects especially other members of the Hymenoptera family (Bees). A true wasp will have buttercup yellow and jet black warning stripes with a smooth coat, unlike a furry coat which can be found on a bee.

The two common species usually nest in the eaves of lofts, Porch and wall cavity's, Sheds, Air bricks and any hollow that has a gap for access. Wasp's nests are made from paper which the wasps manufacture themselves. They scrape off the wood of any suitable untreated fence panel/ post or wooden garden furniture with their strong jaws. Once the wood has been removed, it is pulped up with the wasp's saliva and converted into a rough sort of paper, which is in used to build the nest.

Wasps emerge from April onwards woken by the warmth of spring and seek a suitable place to build a new nest and the wasp cycle starts again.

What purpose do Wasps serve?

Wasps are important, a true predatory insect that hunt and feed on other insects, many of which are caterpillars, hoverflies, flying ants, aphids and many other garden insect pests. The purpose of a wasp is to maintain a balance in nature by controlling the population of other insects and arachnids. Wasps can be seen as nature's best pest controllers because they eat other insects, maintaining a balance in nature by controlling the population of other pests. They are also valuable pollinators.

Why are wasps a pest?

Wasps are considered to be a pest due to their ability to sting which can be very painful and in rare cases can cause a health risk to the recipient of the sting. They tend to pose a hazard if their nest is disturbed in any way. Therefore, a wasps ability to sting is just a method of defence. Children and elderly and those who suffer from anaphylactic shock are particularly vulnerable.

However, wasps are not considered a public health risk (Not vectors of Disease) but can present a nuisance when a nest is found in or around your home or garden, close to human habitation. In the late summer, sweet feeding wasps in search of carbohydrates are the main public health nuisance. But unless the location of the

nest is causing a problem to either yourself or others it can be left as a beneficial control of the food chain.

Insecticidal treatment should only be sought when the wasps pose a risk to residents or to the public

Signs of a wasp nest

Signs may include:

- Many wasps entering and exiting one location (known as their flight path)
- Wasps visible on the outside of the nest
- Wet patches on walls or ceilings if a nest is in your loft or wall cavity
- A dull buzzing/clicking sound

The nest can be seen especially if it is in the loft or in a bush in the garden. This will usually appear as a grey ball which can range from the size of a golf ball (Starter Nest) to the size of a football. If the wasps are a strong strain and have a productive summer the nest size can be substantial.

How to prevent attracting wasps

It can be difficult to prevent wasps, however, there are several ways of reducing the attraction of your premises to wasps. Some things include the following;

- Keeping bins and bin bags with any potential food sources away from your house
- If you decide to have a barbeque, install wasp traps which are available in most garden centres, this will reduce the risk of wasps homing on your food and getting too comfortable in your surrounding environment.
- Inspect your loft regularly to check for any new formations of a nest. It is advisable to check in the late spring to see if any starter nests have appeared
- Removing any fallen apples from the garden

Pest Control contact details

If you discover that you have a wasp nest and you believe that it is causing you a risk, and you are on a means tested benefit Watford Council can provide a treatment service. Please contact **Watford Council on 01923 226400.**