



# Effective Control of Wasps



The wasp is a common sight in urban and rural areas throughout North America and is the most common stinging menace in many Canadian cities. Several thousand people are stung by these venomous insects each year. In some cases, severe allergic reactions to the venom have resulted in death.

## Biology and Life Cycle

Wasps are classified in the group Vespoidea, and the most frequently encountered ones belong to the genera *Vespula*, *Dolichovespula*, and *Vespa* (yellow jackets and hornets). These pests are medium sized (10 mm-25 mm), and are readily distinguished by the bands of black and yellow or white on their abdomens. The most aggressive species encountered is *Vespula germanica* (Fab.) (German yellow jackets). These wasps have a habit of scavenging in city garbage cans.

In early spring, the hibernating queen emerges from cracks, crevices or tree bark to look for a new nesting site. Once found, she builds the first few paper cells and lays a single egg in each cell. These new workers and future workers will take over all the colony duties such as feeding and tending the queen, tending the new larvae, scavenging for food, building new brooding cells, and cooling the nest on hot summer days. In late fall, the colony reaches from 1,000 to 30,000 individuals. There may be more than one colony in any given area.

As the weather turns colder in the fall, the queen usually abandons the nest to look for a hibernating site. The workers also abandon the nest and eventually they all die.



## Physical Control

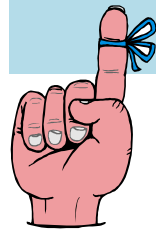
If the location of the nest does not present a health hazard, it is best to leave the nest until November-December when it has been abandoned. The nest can then be removed and disposed of with minimal risk. If the nest must be removed when the wasps are active, the removal procedure should be carried out during the evening when wasps are least active. Depending on the location and structure of the nest, removal can be as simple as enclosing the nest in a plastic bag and detaching the single anchoring stalk from the supporting tree branch or structure. Remember to always wear protective clothing and a head net if possible.

Stings can be soothed with ice packs or with a bicarbonate-of-soda paste. A wasp's venom is very potent. Some people have allergic reactions WHICH REQUIRE medical attention. If the effects of a sting are severe, a doctor should be consulted promptly.

EFFECTIVE ANTI-VENOM SHOTS CAN REDUCE THE INCIDENCE OF SEVERE REACTIONS IN VULNERABLE PEOPLE.

# Chemical Control

Treating the nest with an insecticide such as propoxur or pyrethrins is an effective means of wasp control. Spraying after nightfall is usually preferable because wasps are less active at night. The use of a red filter over a flashlight will provide visibility without increasing wasp activity. Always wear protective clothing when using pesticides.



## Remember

### *Before Purchasing a Pesticide Product*

- Identify the pest correctly.
- Use physical control methods and alternatives to pesticides.
- Read the label directions and safety precautions before buying the product. The label must include the name of the pest to be controlled and the treatment location (e.g., indoor, outdoor, garden uses, pet treatment).
- Purchase only the quantity of product needed for the treatment.
- Alternatively, you may choose to hire a licensed pest control operator.

### *When Using a Pesticide*

- Carefully read all label instructions and precautions before using pesticides.
- Do not drink, eat or smoke while applying pesticides.
- Persons and pets should vacate the area during treatment. Cover or remove aquaria.
- If kitchen area is to be treated, cover or remove food, dishes and utensils.

### *After Handling a Pesticide*

- Always wash your hands thoroughly after handling any pesticide product.
- Do not permit persons or pets to contact treated surfaces until residue has dried completely.
- Provide adequate ventilation of treated areas after use.
- Wipe clean all surfaces that comes in direct contact with food, such as counters, tables and stovetops, including indoor and outdoor surfaces.
- Always store pesticides out of reach of children and pets and away from food and beverages.

### *In Case of Accidental Poisoning*

- Call a poison control centre immediately and seek medical attention.
- Take the pesticide container or label with you to the emergency facility or physician.
- Follow first aid statements on the label.
- In case of accidental poisoning of pets seek veterinary attention immediately.



### *When Disposing of Pesticides*

Do not reuse empty pesticide containers. Wrap and dispose of in household garbage.

Unused or partially used pesticide products should be disposed of at provincially or municipally designated household hazardous waste disposal sites.

### *Use Common Sense*

- These are general recommendations.
- Consult the label for specific instructions.
- When in doubt, contact a professional.

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