Wasp and Bee Control

Wasps and bees are beneficial insects, although they are generally considered to be pests because of their ability to sting. People often mistakenly call all stinging insects “bees”. It is important to distinguish between these insects because different methods may be necessary to control them.

**Wasps:** Wasps have a slender body with a narrow midsection, cylindrical legs, and appear smooth-skinned or shiny. Yellow jackets, bald-faced hornets, and paper wasps are the most common types of wasps encountered by people. Wasps are beneficial because of their predatory nature, feeding on many insects, including caterpillars, flies, crickets and other pests. During late summer and fall, wasps change their food priorities and are more interested in collecting sweets and other carbohydrates. Some wasps become aggressive scavengers around human food and may be common around outdoor activities where food and drink are served.

**Bees:** Bees are robust-bodied and very hairy compared to wasps. Honey bees, Bumble Bees and Carpenter Bees are the most common type encountered by people. Bees are important pollinators. Honey bees are responsible for more than 80% of the pollination required by most fruits and vegetable seed plants. Bees feed only on nectar (carbohydrates) and pollen (protein) from flowers. Honey bees sometimes visit trash cans and soft drink containers to feed on sugary foods.

**Life Cycle of Wasps and Bees:** Wasps & Bumble bees have *annual* colonies that last for only one year. The colony dies in the fall with only the queen surviving the winter. Honey Bees are *perennial* insects with colonies surviving more than one year.

**Wasp and Bee Stings:** Most people have only local reactions to wasp and bee stings, although a few may experience more serious allergic reactions. Local, non-allergic reactions range from burning, itching, redness, and tenderness to massive swelling and itching that may last up to a week. These local reactions can be treated with ice, vinegar, honey, meat tenderizer, or commercial topical ointment to relieve the itching.

An allergic reaction may include hives or rash, swelling away from the sting site, headache, minor respiratory symptoms, and stomach upset. These allergic reactions are not life-threatening and can be readily treated with an antihistamine.
CONTROL OF NESTS

Wasp nests that are visible but are not near your home or areas of human activity do not need to be treated. If they are not disturbed, the wasps won't bother you.

Nests that are near human activity can pose a potential problem. If there is a concern about stings, you should eradicate the nest.

The first step in wasp or bee control is to correctly identify the insect and locate its nesting site. An experienced pest control service may provide wasp or bee control service or you can use the following information to attempt to control them yourself.

- Honeybees may be observed on your property without the presence of a nest. This is termed a “swarm.” Swarming usually occurs in late spring and early summer and begins in the warmer hours of the day. Swarms should be left alone due to the fact that they may move on and nest in another area. If the swarm decides to nest on your property, it is recommended that you hire the services of a beekeeper (or apiarist).

- The nests of Yellow jackets and Hornets should always be approached with caution, preferably at night when most of the workers are present but reluctant to fly.

- If you must approach these nests during daytime, a quick knockdown aerosol can be used to keep the bees/wasps at bay, while you treat the nest.

- Sometimes, nests occur in voids such as vents, attics, crawlspace or hollow walls. Destroying nests in these locations can be difficult, often requiring the services of pest management professionals.

- Be mindful that nests may be located several feet away from the point at which the bees/wasps are entering the structure. Entrance holes should never be plugged, even after treatment, because the bees/wasps will look for other ways to get out of the nest and have been known to chew their way into living quarters, endangering persons inside. Also, use extreme caution when performing bee/wasp control from a ladder.