



## Stinging Insects

### Part I — Aerial Nesting Wasps and Bees

#### Introduction

Most stinging insects are beneficial to man. Bees make our honey and are essential for pollination of many crops. Wasps prey on large quantities of harmful caterpillars and flies that they feed to their young. Unfortunately these insects often build their nests near occupied dwellings and may become a nuisance or even a danger if a person is allergic to their sting.

Most bees and wasps that are a stinging problem are social insects. This means that they generally occur in large numbers in the same nest. Because they are present in large numbers, the only effective control is to locate and destroy the nests.

#### Paper Wasps

Polistes or paper wasps are reddish-brown to dark brown, long legged insects with spindle shaped abdomens. These wasps construct circular gray paper nests which resemble a honeycomb from underneath and seldom exceed four inches in diameter. The nests are frequently found under the eaves of houses, in little used buildings and in attics. The nests are annual (used for only one year).

#### Hornets and Yellowjackets

Hornets and yellowjackets are large, black insects with white or yellow markings. They are built more stockily than Polistes or mud daubers. Their nests resemble a large gray, coarsely textured football or a giant egg and are constructed of a paper maché-like material. The nests are less common than Polistes nests and may be found under eaves and hidden in shrubbery or on tree branches. An active nest may contain over 200 adults. The nests are seasonal.



#### Management of Polistes and Hornets

Insecticides such as carbaryl, Baygon, methoxychlor and household formulations of malathion are recommended in New York State as the best control agents. These products may be purchased in convenient aerosols for outdoor use and are often labeled as wasp and hornet killers. Nests in attics or other enclosed areas may be treated with (Vapona) No-Pest strips. The insecticide sprays are most effective when applied in the early evening and when all of the individuals are in the nest. Cool temperatures (below 60°F.) are also helpful since they slow pest activity. Examine the nest in the daytime so that you will be familiar with its location at night. The aerosol cans differ in their range so always read the directions.

Spray directly into the entrance hole of a hornet's nest for maximum effect. A flashlight may be helpful but its use should be restricted since light may disturb the insects. If the hornets begin to emerge from the nest, simply walk away from the area and return later. Patience will prevent accidents. Two insecticide applications are best for the hornet's nest. The second spraying should be performed approximately one hour after the first, but you may wait until the following night. One treatment should suffice for the Polistes nest. If no activity is observed the day or so after treatment, the nest may be removed and discarded.

The nests of Polistes and hornets are seasonal. If they are located in an inaccessible place and the insects do not present a real problem, the nest should be left alone. The colony will die in the fall after a few hard frosts and the nest will not be reused.

## Mud Daubers



Mud daubers have extremely long, thin waists and are blue to metallic black in color. Their nests are a series of mud cells that often resemble finger-like projections. The adult female provisions the nest with paralyzed spiders for the young to eat.

They are not social wasps and the female leaves the nest after she provisions it. The adults are much less likely to sting than the social wasps.

## Management of Mud Daubers

The adults will abandon the completed nests that may be simply scraped off the substrate and discarded. It is suggested that the nests not be brought into the home because the young mud daubers may emerge from the nest. One of the wasp and hornet aerosols may be used to destroy the adults.

## Honeybee Swarms

Honeybees are relatively small, hairy, yellowish brown insects, though dark brown or black honeybees are not unusual. They are normally kept in bee hives but they will nest in trees and between the walls of houses. The removal or destruction of such nests is covered in Part II: Control of and Wall Nesting Wasps and Bees. Quite often during the months and less frequently throughout the summer, "swarms" of honeybees on the sides of buildings or on nearby trees. These swarms are honeybees that left the old hive to start a new one and they may 4,000 to 30,000 bees. The swarms are generally quite gentle if remain for a day or two before flying to their new homesite.



Subterranean, Tree of May and June, may be encountered composed of include as many as unmolested and will

## Management of Honeybee Swarms

It is unadvisable for the homeowner to try to move or kill a resting swarm of bees. Your Cooperative Extension Association can recommend someone who will remove the swarm if you desire. Beekeepers in the area may be interested also in coming to get the swarms.

## Flying Insect Control

Occasionally bees, hornets or wasps will enter buildings. They can be controlled by spraying one of the recommended aerosols directly on the insect or by the use of a fly swatter.

