Bees vs. Wasp

In the summer months, backyard barbeques are often visited by uninvited stinging insects. Stinging insects send more than half a million people to emergency rooms each year and most of these stings are caused by wasps and hornets. Although capable of stinging, under normal circumstances, bees play a beneficial role in the backyard.

The vast majority of stings that occur in North America are inflicted by social wasps or hornets. Social wasps and hornets live communally in nests that can range in size from small to extremely large. When threatened or disturbed, these pests will respond aggressively to defend the nest with repeated stings to the offending party.

Social bees, with the exception of Africanized honey bees, are rarely aggressive and almost always considered beneficial. Bumble bees and honey bees are often seen buzzing from one flower to the next in backyard gardens. Each plays an important role transferring pollen from one flower to the next. Without this important service, most of the fruit and vegetables that we rely on for food would be nonexistent. On a commercial scale, honey bees also provide products like honey and beeswax.

Nevertheless, stings sometimes happen. If you are stung, remove the stinger with a fingernail or tweezers, ice the area and take an over-the-counter pain reliever if necessary.

For more information about bees, wasps and other pollinators, visit www.pollinatorhealth.org.

Yellow Jackets

Yellowjackets: the word is synonymous with pain and can be enough to make you squirm with the thought of discomfort. Summer is the time when these stinging insects gain strength in numbers and can wreak havoc across North America and in both rural and urban environments. Yellowjacket queens mate in the fall and spend the winter months overwintering in a protected spot, often in structural voids. When they emerge in the spring, the queens begin the tireless task of building a nest, populating it with offspring, and raising the first generation of her brood. Once these wasps reach adulthood, they are ready to take on the responsibilities that come with being called a worker: expanding and fixing the nest, helping rear subsequent broods, foraging for food, and protecting the colony against external threats. Adult yellowjackets are pollinators, searching for nectar and other sweets, but they also collect proteinaceous food like beetle grubs, which they bring back to the hive and feed to the larvae. Foraging yellowjackets have also been reported to take human food when it’s outside so keep your eyes open!

There are several species of yellowjackets but on the whole, they range in length from 1/2” to 5/8” and they have wings that are folded at rest and smoky-colored. They have a fairly wide and rounded body that is slightly wider than the head capsule. If you get close enough to a yellowjacket you can see that they have long hairs on their head and a yellow ‘face.’ The pattern of yellow markings continued on page 2.
Yellow Jackets (continued from page 1)

on the thorax and abdomen are useful in making species-level determinations.

Yellowjacket nests are typically below ground, but some species will nest aerially. Aerial nesting yellowjackets make use of trees, attics, and other places that offer some confining spaces. The ground nests are particularly troubling because they can easily go unnoticed. Children playing catch in the yard, or someone mowing a lawn may inadvertently disturb the nest and incur the unfortunate wrath of these stinging pests. Trust us, if you get too close to a yellowjacket nest, they will let you know! Unlike honey bees, yellowjackets and other stinging wasps are capable of, and willing to, sting repeatedly and pursue perceived threats. Don’t risk your health trying to treat or remove nests yourself; do the right thing and call us today to come and take care of it for you and your family.

House Flies

H house flies are the most-common structure infesting fly in North America and are distributed throughout the world. Their scientific name, Musca domestica, is indicative of their affinity for living in and around structures, both rural and urban. House flies are about a quarter of an inch long and females are slightly larger than males. The thorax is dull gray with 4 dark stripes on it. Unlike other insects, flies only have one pair of wings. House flies are incredibly adept fliers and can travel multiple miles per day. One fly was found 20 miles away from where it was first tracked! House flies have sponging mouthparts and secrete saliva with digestive enzymes onto food to liquefy it which allows them to sponge it up.

House flies are usually viewed as annoying but basically benign pests that are just a fact of life in the summertime. The constant flying and buzzing is a major nuisance, but far from the only problem they cause. In fact, the more you know about them the less forgiving of their presence you will be. House flies literally breed in filth and prefer decaying organic matter containing moisture like manure, decaying meat, garbage containers, grass clippings, and composted fruits and vegetables.

If that wasn’t bad enough, house flies are highly mobile and can quickly move from a bacteria-infested egg-laying site to the hamburger you’re about to eat. House flies are known to mechanically transmit a host of nasty pathogens by doing that very thing. Fly ‘feet’ are quite sticky and they bring traces of where they just were with them. There are a wide range of possible pathogens transferred including viruses, bacteria (like E. coli), fungi, and other harmful micro-organisms. House flies clearly pose more risk than mere annoyance!

If you are noticing house flies in and around your home, don’t hesitate to call us right away. These pests develop very quickly, especially in warm and humid conditions, and can reach adulthood in a little over a week. Adults typically only live between 2 and 4 weeks, however, 2 weeks of a fly buzzing around the kitchen can seem like an eternity. And just so you don’t think that after a month the flies will be gone, know that there can be 10 to 12 generations a year! All that adds up to a major problem if it isn’t addressed head on from the start. Let us handle the dirty work and rid your house of flies this summer.
The sudden onslaught of these medium to large insects usually happens sometime right in the middle of summer, though the “June” part doesn’t always hold true. The ‘bug’ part of their name doesn’t hold true either if you are speaking from a technical sense. These seasonal pests are actually beetles and belong to the scarab family. In ancient Egypt, scarab beetles were held in high esteem and were even commonly depicted in hieroglyphics. There are several species that are called Junebugs, but in general, they are up to an inch long and have an oval shape when viewed from above. Some Junebugs are brown, some are metallic green; some are native to the United States and others are invasive species.

What’s consistent among beetles called Junebugs is that they can cause problems in a few ways. As grubs, they live in the soil and feed on the roots of grasses and other plants so don’t expect to see them unless you are digging around in the dirt. However, if there are a lot of them around, you might notice the damage they cause to the plant-life. Amazingly, Junebugs can spend a year or two in the larval stage. Adult Junebugs are also plant feeders, preferring to munch on the leaves of bushes and trees during the daytime. These beetles are strongly attracted to light and you might be confronted with a lot of them around your exterior lighting. With so many Junebugs around your house, some of them might very well find their way indoors; which is not a welcomed sight to most people. If you are noticing these pesky pests around your doors or eating away on your prized bushes, let us know and we will be happy to keep them at bay.
Weather and Pests: What's the Relationship?

The weather can determine more than whether or not today would be a good day to have a picnic in the park. When it comes to pest insects, the weather (temperature and humidity) is closely tied to their abundance and activity levels. If you pay attention to weather conditions, you might be able to predict when certain pests will be problematic. Typically, the ebbs and flows of weather conditions make it so there are periods of good pest weather and bad pest weather but prolonged bouts of moisture and drought can send some pests searching an environmental reprieve ... inside your house!

This summer, keep an eye out for two sets of conditions that have reliably led to an increase of pests indoors: extended periods of heavy rain (especially when combined with unseasonably cool temperatures) and stretches of hot, dry weather. In both cases, either an abundance or lack of water is driving this behavior. Ants are especially prone to seeking refuge in a place with more favorable conditions and can show up in unexpected places. If you notice an ant in your home, let us know so we can take care of it and determine if it is just a stray worker or part of a newly relocated colony.

Mosquitoes are much more prevalent when there is plentiful rain, but their eggs are hardy enough to withstand an extended length of time without. Once rain comes, eggs hatch and their fast life cycle is underway. Some species require the tiniest amount of water for their development. For this reason, you can help reduce mosquitoes around your home by preventing standing water from accumulating in your yard or in any artificial container. Unfortunately, you can’t control what your neighbors leave lying around so give us a call if you are being bitten or otherwise noticing mosquitoes around your home.