

Trap the big hornets

by Trish Rudder

Local people are noticing European hornets and asked us to reprint Trish Rudder's article from last year about how to trap & protect against them. Below is an edited version.

Morgan County Master Gardener Norman Dean, who worked in the entomology division with the W.Va. Department of Agriculture, said hornets become aggressive if you get close to their nest.

The hornets are attracted to the bark on lilac trees to nest in and usually nest in hollow trees or in an attic. They won't swarm like yellow jackets but will become aggressive if you get close to their nest, he said. They are also attracted to lights.

Dean said the European hornet is not attracted to sweetened water in a hummingbird feeder like bees are, but people have seen hornets flying around their feeders.

Wade Stiltner, an apiarist with the W.Va. Department of Agriculture said the hornets eat fruit, and he believes the reason a hornet hangs around a hummingbird feeder is to kill the honey bees.

According to the Pennsylvania State University Department of Entomology, the European hornet is large and will aggressively defend their nests.

The adult hornet worker is about an inch in length with yellow and brown

coloration. The overwintering queens are larger and are about one-and-one-half inches in length.

European hornet colonies often contain 300 or more workers by September or October.

In addition to the hazard created by their stings, the hornets will also damage various trees and shrubs by girdling the branches and twigs to gather bark for nest building and to obtain nourishment from the sap, wrote Steve Jacobs, Senior Extension Associate of Penn State College of Agricultural Sciences.

Cold weather will kill the hornets. The male and worker bees die in the fall or winter, and only the mated queens survive.

Stiltner said the hornet queens hibernate over the winter and start new nests in the spring. A reason the hornets are more prevalent this year might be because of the mild winter we had, although the population does vary from high to low each year.

Hornet trap

Stiltner said people can make up a safe concoction to trap hornets. Cut a nickel-size hole on one side of an



Steve Jacobs
PSU Entomology

European Hornet
credit Pennsylvania State University Entomology Dept.

empty two-liter pop bottle about one-fourth from the top. Put the following inside the bottle:

Two cups sugar, two cups water, one-half cup of white vinegar and one-fourth of a banana peel.

Tie a cord around the neck of the bottle and hang it from a branch close to the nest. It will trap hornets, wasps, and yellow jackets but due to the vinegar and banana peel, honey bees will not enter the trap.

When full, put a piece of duct tape over the hole and dispose of the bottle, Stiltner said.

It is also a good idea to trap the queens in the beginning of spring to reduce the number of hornets.

A professional can be contacted to remove the hornet nest.



European Hornet Trap drawing.
credit Jackson County, W.Va. Beekeepers Assn.

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