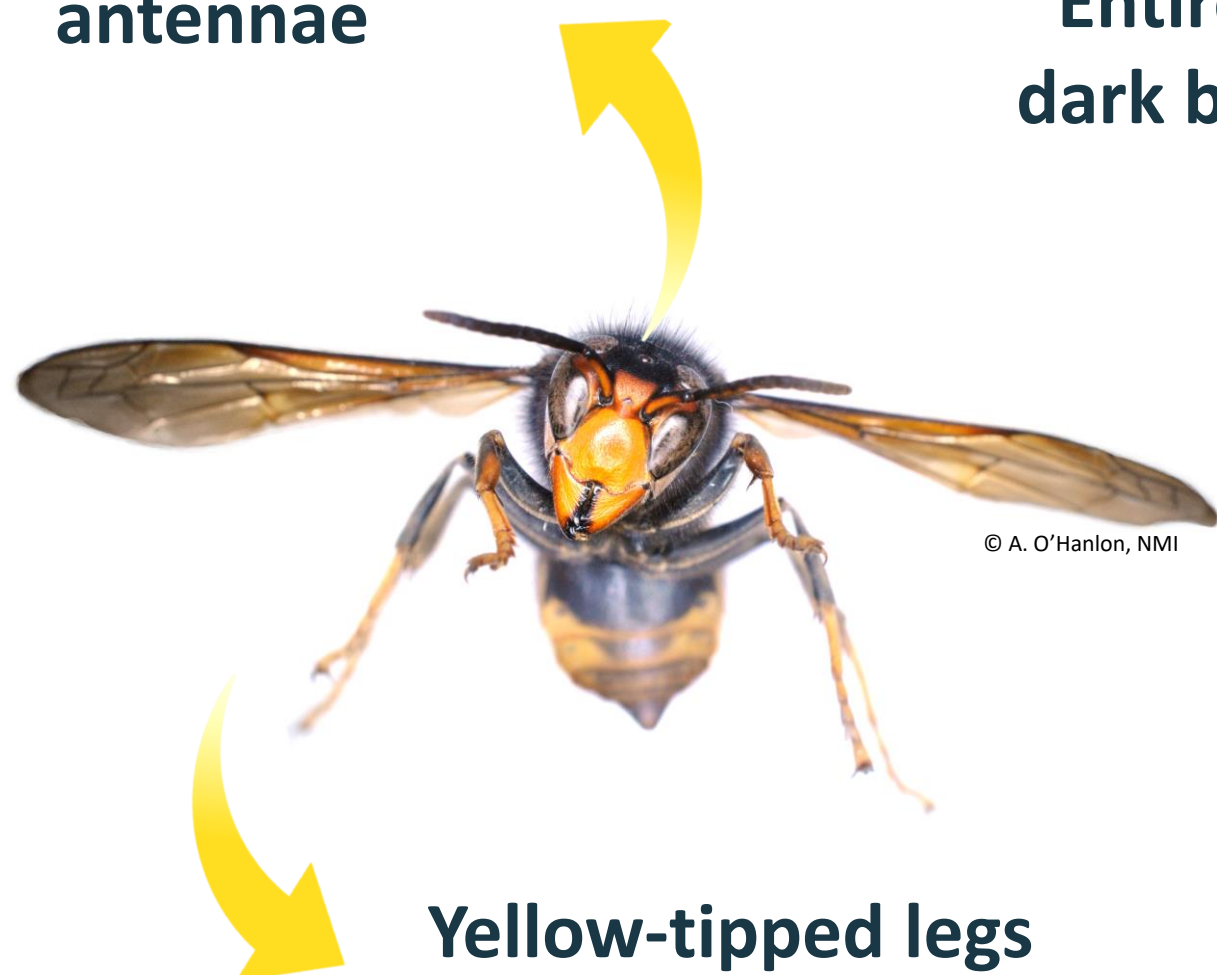




What is an Asian hornet?

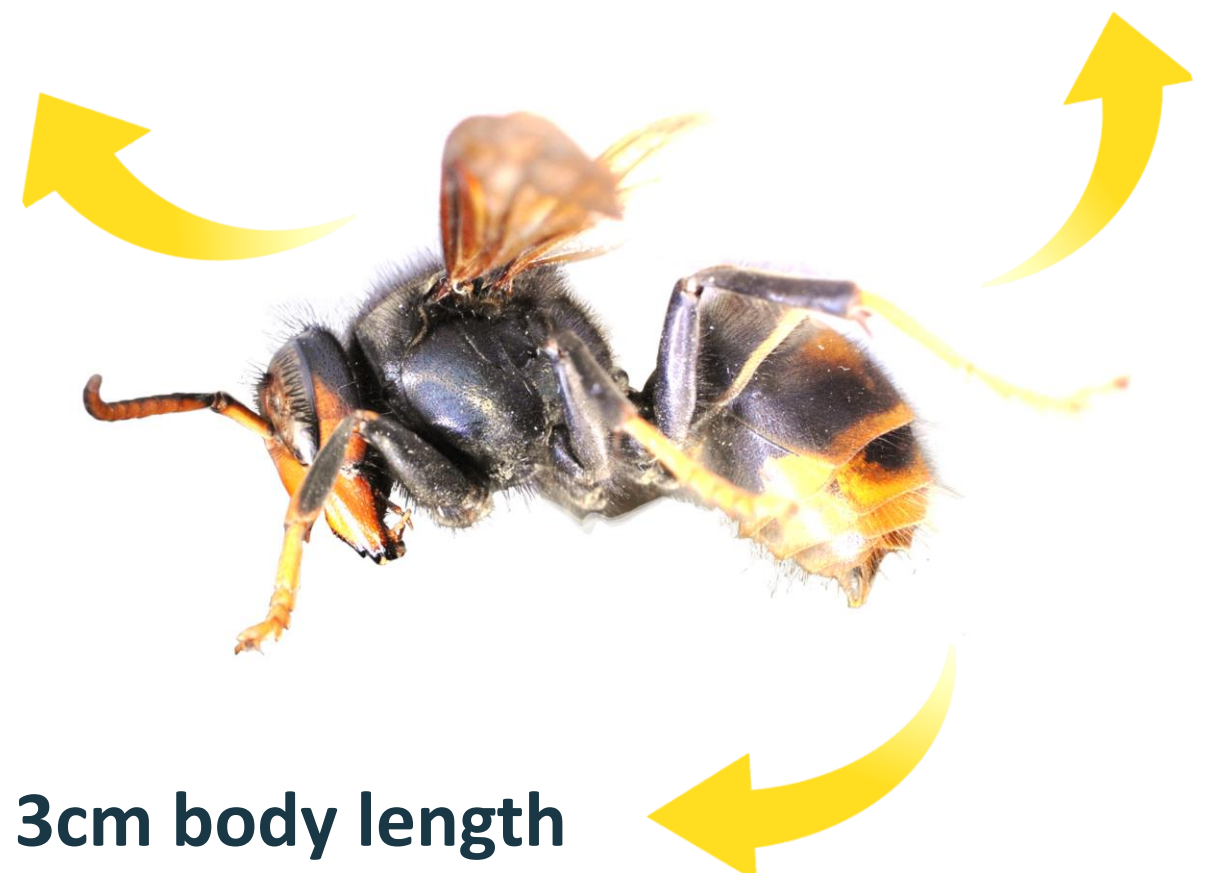
The Asian hornet is a large social wasp native to east Asia. It was introduced accidentally to France in 2004 and has since spread throughout much of western Europe. It was reported in Ireland for the first time in April 2021. The Asian hornet is an aggressive predator of insects, especially honey bees and other pollinators. It poses a potential threat to our native biodiversity should it establish in Ireland. To stop the spread and establishment of the Asian hornet in Ireland, it is important that the public become aware of what it looks like and how to report suspected sightings.

Orange face and dark antennae



Entirely black or dark brown thorax

Yellow/orange 4th abdomen segment



Yellow-tipped legs

2 – 3cm body length

Where does it nest?

In spring, a fertilised queen emerges from her hibernation spot and makes a small, circular, papery 'primary nest' (normally the size of a tennis ball). She lays her eggs in brood cells in a single comb and continues to build the nest until newly hatched hornets (workers) take over her tasks, except lay eggs. These nests are typically built close to the ground and are difficult to distinguish from a wasp's nest at this stage.

Primary nest



'Secondary nests' are typically oval in shape and are larger (can be up to 80 cm in diameter) to accommodate a growing colony. Secondary nests are often located high up in tall trees and buildings. However they can also be found lower down on man-made structures and even underground.

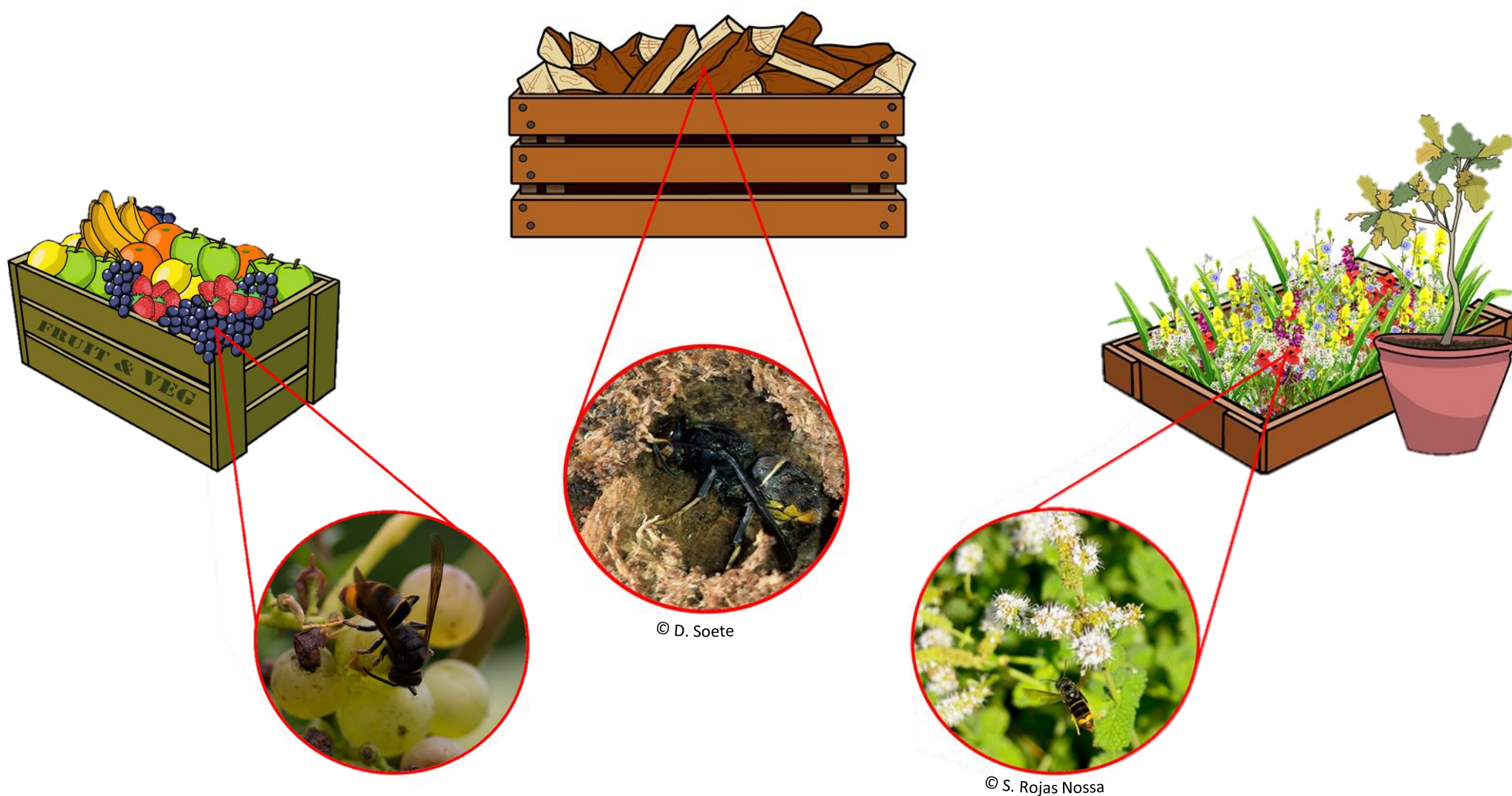
Secondary nest





Where might I see one?

Asian hornets are active from March - November, peaking in numbers by September before dying off over winter. Mated queens hibernate in dry sheltered places and as a result are often accidentally introduced to new areas through imported goods e.g. timber, soil, fruit and man-made goods like pottery. Hornets may be seen near food - and nest - building resources (water, wood, fruit, flowers and discarded human food waste), and will actively seek out beehives and areas where bees and other pollinators are present.



How can I help?

It is important to familiarise yourself with the Asian hornet. There are no hornets native to Ireland that can be confused with the Asian hornet, but native bees and other pollinators can be mistaken for the invasive hornet. Special care should be taken not to harm native wasps and bees which are vital for pollination and other ecosystem services.

If you suspect that you have seen a hornet, report it immediately (with a photo if possible) to the National Biodiversity Data Centre via biodiversityireland.ie or the app.

Scan below to make a report



Native Species often confused with the Asian hornet

Asian Hornet*
Vespa velutina



*not native

© A. O'Hanlon, NMI

Common wasp
Vespa vulgaris



Giant wood wasp
Urocerus gigas



Birch sawfly
Cimbex femoratus

