

ASIAN HORNET

Vespa velutina Lepelletier

Bee pest information note

What is it?

The Asian Hornet *Vespa velutina* is a species of wasp that originates in Asia. It is a highly aggressive predator of native insects including honey bees. This hornet was first encountered in Europe in 2004. It was found in south west of France and has spread widely in France since then. It is thought that it was introduced into France through a shipment of imported pottery from China. It has now been reported in Spain, Portugal, Italy and Belgium. As of April 2015 there are still no known records of this hornet in either Ireland or the UK.

The Asian Hornet should not be confused with the Giant Asian Hornet (*Vespa mandarinia*) which is not present in Europe. Two other species of hornet are found in Europe, *Vespa crabro* and *Vespa orientalis* (not widespread in Europe) but both these species are not found in Ireland. These two species are also predators of other insects.

Why should we be worried?



The Asian Hornet feeds on a wide variety of insects, among the insects this hornet targets are bees, particularly cultivated bees but wild bees are also at risk. This poses a significant threat to honey bees and other pollinators.

The Asian Hornet can sting and some people will have an allergic reaction to its sting, however in general its sting is considered to be similar to a bee or wasp sting.

Image: Vespa velutina hunting at a hive entrance (Imaae taken by J. Haxaire)



Nests are likely to be found in trees in urban and rural areas, but nests may also be found in garages, sheds and under decking. Nests can be up to 80cm in diameter.

Image: Vespa velutina nest in a tree (Image from www.arkive.org, copyright Daniel Heuclin)

How do I recognise the Asian Hornet?

The Asian Hornet is easy to recognise, it is predominantly black with brown abdominal segments that are bordered with a fine yellow band. Only the fourth abdominal segment is almost entirely yellow/orange. The legs are brown with yellow ends and the head is black with an orange-yellow face. It is usually 25mm to 30mm in length.

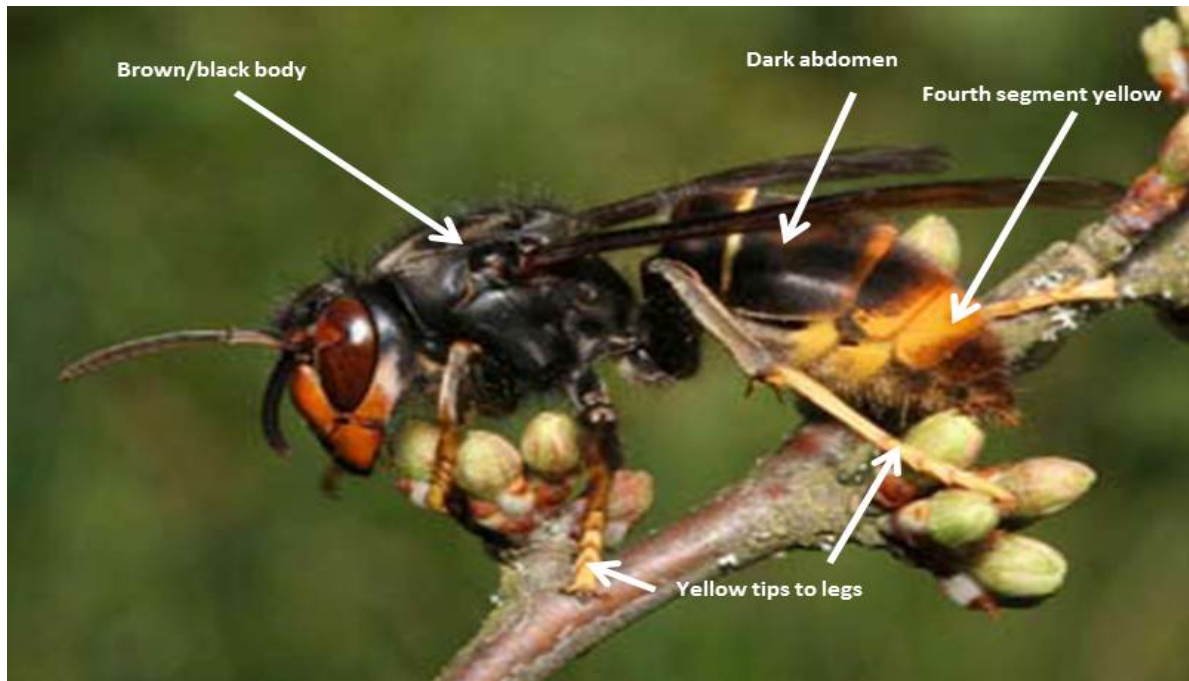


Image taken from NNSS (GB non-native species secretariat) Photo taken by J. Haxaire

Action in the case of suspect cases

Please notify the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine (DAFM) of any suspect Asian hornets, providing as much information as possible (location, photos etc.). If it is possible please send a dead sample to DAFM for examination. The specimens can be killed by placing them in domestic freezer overnight. If collecting a sample please take all necessary precautions as hornets can sting. Please firstly seek advice using the details below.

Horticulture and Plant Health Division,

Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine,
Backweston Campus,
Celbridge,
Co. Kildare.
Phone: 01-5058600

Email: beekeeping@agriculture.gov.ie