

# COMMON WASP AND GERMAN WASP

*Vespula vulgaris* and *Vespula germanica*

## Management programme

Exclusion	Eradication	Progressive containment	Sustained control	Site-led
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## Impacts

Economic	Biodiversity	Soil resources	Water quantity/quality
Human health	Social and cultural wellbeing	Amenity/recreation	Animal welfare

## Objectives

Reduce the risk common and German wasps pose to the public in areas where they are causing a nuisance and provide advice and information on these and other introduced wasp species.

## Why is it a pest?

German and common wasps pose the greatest risk to human health. They also attack beehives and prey on native insects. The common wasp and the German wasp inhabit agricultural areas, native forests, planted forests, scrub/shrublands and urban areas where they nest underground and in cavities in trees and buildings.

Asian and Australian paper wasps, later arrivals to New Zealand, are also present in the region. They are far less aggressive than German and common wasps, but they also prey on insects and chew wooden structures. The Asian paper wasp is larger than the Australian paper wasp. It arrived in New Zealand in the late 1970s and by 1995 was widespread throughout the upper North Island. It thrives in lowland open habitats such as shrublands, swamps and salt marshes but will often build nests on houses or other buildings as well as nesting in trees or bushes.

Australian paper wasps have been in New Zealand for over 100 years and also build nests in buildings and trees. All of these wasp species compete to some degree with birds and other insects for the same food sources (many of which native animals depend on). These include nectar and honeydew/ sugar resources, insect prey and fruit crops.

As well as inflicting a painful sting (which can cause an allergic reaction), wasps can frighten people, cause schools to close and forestry operations to stop. Their presence can force campers and tourists to leave some of New Zealand's most visited conservation areas. Beekeepers class wasps as a serious threat to their industry and orchard and viticulture operations suffer the destruction of fruit damaged by these wasps.

## Checking for signs of wasps

German and common wasps usually nest underground, although they sometimes use hollow trees, walls, and roofs of buildings. Nests can be difficult to find, particularly in bush or scrub.

Paper wasps build elaborate papier-mache-like nests from plant fibres, which are generally bell shaped with hexagonal cells and suspended from branches of shrubs or hanging under eaves.

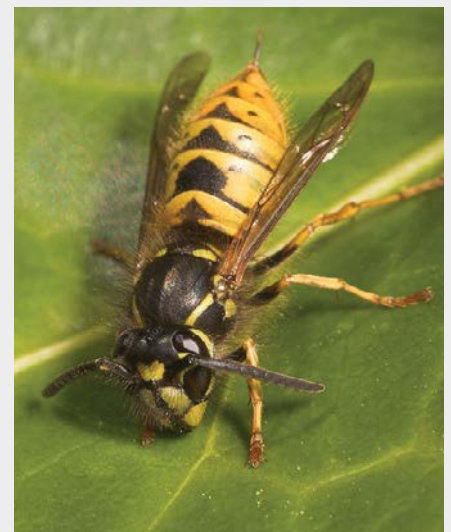


## What do they look like?

Common and German wasps are slightly larger than honeybees, with both having distinctive black and yellow stripes. They can be mistaken for paper wasps, which are generally smaller with less yellow in their markings.



Common wasp



German wasp

- Generally 12mm to 17mm long, although queens are larger.
- Slightly bigger than a honeybee with smooth rather than hairy bodies.
- Workers have a black mark behind the eye on the side of the head and an anchor-shaped or dagger shaped mark on the 'face'.
- Black head and thorax (area in front of 'waist').
- Yellow and black stripes with dots on the abdomen.
- Stripes are fused on the common wasp but separated on the German wasp.

## Responsibility for control

### All occupiers in the Waikato region shall control common wasp or German wasp nests on their property.

- Occupiers in the Waikato region, on direction from an authorised person upon complaint, are responsible for controlling common wasp or German wasp nests on their property (rule WASP-1 of the **Waikato Regional Pest Management Plan 2022-2032**).
- Problem common wasp or German wasp nests on district or city council reserves and accessways should be reported to the appropriate council, which should arrange for the nests to be destroyed. Nests on Department of Conservation (DOC) land should be reported to the nearest DOC office or visitor centre.

## How can I control wasps?

There are a range of toxins available for controlling wasps. Manaaki Whenua Landcare Research has best practice advice on their website for landowners and community groups on how to undertake wasp control.

Wasps will most often search for food near their nest so if you can kill all the nests within 200m of a problem area, you should significantly reduce their numbers. If you are allergic to stings, don't attempt to destroy nests. Arrange for a local commercial pest control contractor to fumigate the nests.

## How to deal with individual German wasp and common wasp nests

Look for flight paths at dawn or dusk on warm, sunny days when large numbers of wasps will be leaving or returning to the nest. Wasp control is best done at night or twilight on cool days when they are generally inactive.

Suitable insecticides available from hardware and garden shops include:

- NO Wasps Eliminator – powder puff pack for application to wasp nests (Kiwicare Corporation Limited)
- NO Wasps Spray or Bait (Kiwicare Corporation Limited)
- BLITZEM! Wasp Killer Nest Destroyer (Yates NZ Ltd)
- Permethrin Insect Dust (Environment Health Products).

### For larger-scale wasp control

Vespex is a product available for larger-scale wasp control – refer to the DOC or Merchanto websites for advice and information on the use of Vespex. Hawkeye wasp lure and bait is another product available for smaller or large infestations.

## How to deal with Asian and Australian paper wasps

Spray the nest with household fly spray in the evening, when all the wasps are likely to be in the nest. The nest can then be removed by placing a bag under the nest, pulling it up over the nest and clipping the nest off into the bag. Seal and dispose of it in the rubbish or burn it.



Asian paper wasp nest. Image: Don Horne / CC BY (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0>)

## Paper wasps (*Polistes* species)

- Paper wasps are generally smaller than German and common wasps.
- Asian paper wasps (*Polistes chinensis*) are 13mm-25mm long.
- Australian paper wasps (*Polistes humilis*) are smaller, 10mm-15mm long.
- Both species' wings are reddish-brown to amber brown.
- Asian paper wasps have yellow and black bodies with tan legs.
- Australian paper wasps are smaller than the Asian wasp and their bodies are reddish-brown
- Both species have long legs which dangle beneath their bodies during flight.



Asian Paper Wasp. Image: Jan Doak CC BY-NC 4.0

## More information

### Advice

- For advice and additional information on control methods, call our pest animal staff on freephone 0800 800 401.

### Web

- Vespula wasps in New Zealand – [landcareresearch.co.nz](http://landcareresearch.co.nz)
- Wasp control – [doc.govt.nz](http://doc.govt.nz)
- *Waikato Regional Pest Management Plan 2022-2032* – [waikatoregion.govt.nz/rpmp](http://waikatoregion.govt.nz/rpmp)