

Background

European wasps, *Vespula germanica*, are native to Europe and have established in North America, South Africa, New Zealand and eastern Australia.

The first European wasp nest was discovered in WA in 1977. The Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development (DPIRD) initiated its European wasp trap surveillance system in the summer of 1994 as part of its ongoing eradication program. It was introduced to alleviate the heavy reliance on public reports to detect the presence of European wasps in WA and is crucial to the program today. Without the ongoing surveillance trapping and public reporting, European wasps would have established in WA long ago.

European wasp range

The predicted range of establishment for European wasp is from Kalbarri to Eucla. Nest establishment seems to be limited to urbanised areas and in particular industrialised urban areas. Traditional 'hot spots' for European wasp nests include industrial and residential areas such as Welshpool, Kewdale, Canning Vale, Bibra Lake, Atwell, Munster, Malaga, Roleystone and Wangara.

European wasps - what to look for:

- The antennae (feelers) are entirely black.
- The wasps are brightly coloured yellow and black, with yellow legs.
- Raise legs during flight (all other wasps dangle their legs)
- Nests are usually underground, but can be located in trees or in roof or wall cavities.
- European wasps are unusual as they scavenge on meat, fruit, human food & drinks and pet food.

Trapping protocol

The DPIRD traps are successful in catching European wasps. There may be some escapees, but the traps are generally very useful in alerting us to the presence of a nearby nest. Wasp nests are usually found within 200 metres from where wasps are caught in a trap. Other wasps, flies or bees are rarely trapped if fish lures of the correct size are used (see image below). Fresh fish lures become less attractive to flies as they dry out in warm weather.



Lures

Uncooked (fresh or frozen) fish (e.g. pink ling or other non-oily white fish) is the most effective lure and the easiest to work with. Instead of rotting it generally dries up to a hard, almost odourless cube. Fish is bought fresh then cut into ice-cube sized pieces and frozen prior to using. One piece is placed in the trap at a time and replaced weekly to fortnightly.



Trap placement

Traps are best deployed from early December then taken in after May and cleaned and stored.

The traps are more effective where alternative food sources are scarce, and as European wasps are primarily introduced via imported merchandise, the most likely places to trap them are industrial areas and freight end points (freight terminals, trucking yards and ports).



Wasps fly along corridors such as drain reserves, paths and roads. To a wasp this offers more effective foraging than flying up and over building after building. They use their sense of smell to find food, so if a trap is placed in a flight corridor, wasps will smell the fish when flying past.

Lures will stay fresher when traps are hung in a tree or other shade source. Sometimes trees also attract ants, so a shaded pole or fence is even better. The trap should hang free from contact with other branches or foliage, so entry holes are unrestricted and ant access is limited. Place the trap about 1.5 – 2 metres above the ground. Place the trap in an inconspicuous position to avoid vandalism. Traps will often be damaged or just disappear if placed in obvious public areas. Traps may be relocated if they haven't caught a wasp after 5 or 6 weeks. This is optional and generally for trapping large areas (e.g. local government traps).

Trap servicing

It is best to renew the lure and check the trap every week if possible, otherwise fortnightly. This is because the fish lures are most effective in the first 48 hours and dead wasps are sometimes removed by ants. Discard the old lure.

Always check the traps carefully; there may be live wasps present or just a trace of the wasp remaining such as a head or abdomen.

The trap only needs replacing if it is damaged. DPIRD will replace it upon request.

Reporting

If you see a suspect wasp or catch one in your trap, please report as soon as possible. Ways to report:

- Online: mypestguide.agric.wa.gov.au
- Smartphone: **MyPestGuide™ Reporter app**
- Contact: the Pest and Diseases Information Service (PaDIS) via padis@dpird.wa.gov.au or (08) 9368 3080

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