

INFORMATION SHEET



Asian hornet

The *Vespa velutina* or yellow-legged hornet is an alien invasive species native to Southeast Asia. It was accidentally introduced in France in 2004, and since then it has spread rapidly to other countries. It is now present in Italy, Spain, Portugal, Germany, Belgium, the Netherlands, the United Kingdom and Switzerland.

Species description

The Asian hornet *Vespa velutina* can easily be confused with the European hornet *Vespa crabro*. The Asian hornet is slightly smaller, the head, chest and part of the abdomen are black, with a narrow yellow band at the beginning of the abdomen, and a distinctive yellow-orange stripe at the end of the abdomen. The legs are black with yellow ends. The head is yellow-orange from the front and black when viewed from above.

The chest of the European hornet is covered with reddish spots, and the abdomen is yellow with black stripes. The legs are brown. The head is yellow in the front, and orange-brown when viewed from above.



Asian hornet

measures about 3 cm (queen).
The appearance is rather black
with yellow feet.



European hornet

measures about 4 cm (queen).
The appearance is rather
orange-black-yellow.

The Asian hornet *Vespa velutina* subspecies *Nigrithorax* has been identified as a high-risk invasive alien species in the EU because of the threat to native biodiversity. It is a predator of a variety of insects, including pollinators. It is of increasing concern for beekeepers, because its presence can cause significant losses to honeybee colonies. It is also becoming a concern for local authorities and to the general public.

Observations

The nests of the Asian hornet are built in the tree canopy, often at a height of more than 15 meters, and usually hidden under layers of foliage and branches. Nests may also be found near dwellings and buildings. The Asian hornets are only active during the day. Queens and male hornets hatch in late summer and mate in the fall.

What to do

Early observation of Asian hornets and the effective destruction of their primary and secondary nests by authorized experts are the most effective measures to slow their spread. Asian hornets often fly around honeybee hives, where they catch bees right at the entrance to the hives. They can also be found in orchards, where they feed on the sweet juice of ripe fruits.

When a beekeeper observes that there are Asian hornets around the apiary, these are essential measures to take:

- Protect the entrance of the hives with nets or muzzles,
- Keep strong and healthy bees,
- Maintain the apiaries clean, and
- Report the sight of *Vespa velutina* to the local beekeeping association and the national authorities responsible for the invasive species.



Vespa velutina workers on its nest.



Interior of the *Vespa velutina* secondary nest.



Vespa velutina primary nest.



Vespa velutina secondary nest in the tree branches.



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