Yellowjackets

Dolichovespula and *Vespula*

Dolichovespula tend to create exposed aerial nests (a feature that is also shared with true Hornets)

Vespula build concealed nests that are usually underground.

Introduction

All females are capable of stinging and due to their "lance-like" stinger are capable of stinging repeatedly. Occasionally the yellowjacket's stinger can get lodged and pull free from their body. The venom from yellow jackets is dangerous to those who either have been stung repeatedly or those who are allergic. Yellowjacket nests' usually last for one season that dies off in the winter except for in mild winter climates where nesting activities can continue throughout the year. These nests are made from wood chewed into a paper(ish) pulp and are normally located in shrubs, trees, homemade structures, and even soil cavities such as unoccupied rodent burrows. Although yellowjackets are considered a pest due to their aggressive behavior and ability to sting they are considered to be important predators on other pest insects

Identification

Yellowjackets can be distinguished with many different characteristics. The first being that yellowjackets unlike bees are not covered with dense tan-brownish hair particles and they lack hairy hind legs used for pollination. Most yellow jackets appear bright yellow & black while some have a reddish background coloring instead of black and they usally have yellow faces. Yellow jackets have an identifiable rapid side-to-side, darting action while in flight. The queen is approximetly19mm (0.75in) in length while the typical workers are 12 mm (0.5 in) long. Their markings are distinct with sharp bright color contrast and they occur only in colonies. Their mouthparts are also well developed (strong mandibles) for catching and chewing insects.

Behavior

When the nest reaches its full potential Reproductive cells are built with new males so the queen can produce. After mating the males die off while the fertilized queen finds shelter to survive the winter. In extreme winter climate the colony workers dwindle normally leaving the nest to rapidly decompose. Abounded nest will usually disintegrate during winter months but typically are not used again. Springtime is essential to colony establishment. Adults will feed on fruits, nectar, flowers, &tree sap. Whereas larvae, feed on proteins such as: meats, insects, & fish. The adults chew the proteins to feed to thier larvae. In return, the larvae secrete a sugar that is relished by the adults.

In the late summer months, larvae fall short in sugar requirements needed by the adult workers so the adult's food preferences change from meats (that they normally fed to the larvae) to decaying &/or ripe fruits, sodas, human garbage, as well as picnic foods, for their source of carbohydrates. This change in food preference is why yellowjackets are often an unwelcome pest at outdoor events.