WASPS

The common wasp (Vespula vulgaris) is about 15 mm in length with a distinctive yellow and black banding. The queen wasp, somewhat larger than the worker, emerges from hibernation in the spring and begins to build a ball shaped nest of about 2-3 inches in diameter. The nest is made from chewed wood pulp which is laid down with a very fragile paper-like outer shell. The few initial cells in the original golf ball size nest are expanded throughout the summer as the queen wasp continues to lay eggs and the emerging adult worker wasps take on the nest building to accommodate the growing colony.

At the end of summer the nest may be the size of a football or larger and will contain many thousands of developing grubs and mature wasps. As cold weather approaches and the colony dies off, a new queen will seek out a suitable sheltered spot to hibernate until the following spring when the whole process begins again. Wasp nests are often found in roof spaces, cavity walls, and holes in trees or in the ground. Wasps are usually only a nuisance in late summer when the workers are finished their nest building and become preoccupied with foraging for sweet substances such as over-ripe fruit, and if provoked they are more likely to sting at that time.

The legal position

There is no legal requirement for the Council to provide a wasp treatment service.

The Service Provided by the Council

The Council offers a wasp treatment service for which a charge is made, for both domestic and commercial premises during the summer months. This service is generally available when wasps are most active, from June until the end of October. The treatment consists of applying an insecticide to the nest either in the form of a liquid or a dust. The nest will then slowly die over a period of 2 to 4 days. Most nests are found in the roof space; however the treatment can usually be carried out without entering the loft and without unduly disturbing the wasps. Wasps do not re-use old nests therefore there is no need to remove a dead nest. The Council does not provide a wasp nest removal service. However, if following the treatment you wish to remove a nest yourself, you should leave it for at least 2 weeks to make sure that all of the wasps are dead and then, providing it is safe to do so, knock it down into a plastic sack. The treatment is usually very effective but there may be occasions when it does not work. Therefore, should you still see large numbers of wasps entering and leaving the nest 7 days after the treatment, please inform the Council and a re-treatment will be arranged at no extra cost.

Safety Information

The insecticides that the Council uses are the safest available and do not pose any risk to people or pets with the exception of fish which have similar body structures to insects and so can be affected if they come into contact with the insecticide. You will however be left an information sheet on the insecticide used by the operative. The health risks from wasp stings vary from individual to individual, however most people only get symptoms of localised swelling and pain which can be treated by using any of the proprietary creams. If you have experienced any serious symptoms after receiving a wasp sting you should seek advice from your doctor. Wasps are most likely to become a nuisance and sting later in the
year when their life cycle is coming to an end. It is therefore better to have a nest treated as soon as it is discovered, rather than wait until it becomes a significant problem. There is also less demand for the Council service at the beginning of the summer, therefore treatment waiting times are reduced.

**Contacting the Service**

Treatments can be requested by contacting the Pest Control Service. You can also request a service by completing the online form.

Should you not wish to use the Council’s service; Private Contractors will provide a similar service. Details of private pest control firms can be found in Yellow Pages, under “Pest-Control”. The Council does not recommend individual contractors.