



Four species of wasps occur within the Bay of Plenty region. The German and Common wasp are known to most people and cause many problems with their aggressive behaviour. Asian paper wasps commonly occur in coastal areas of the Bay of Plenty and are regularly found in urban gardens and along bush edges, while the Australian paper wasp is occasionally seen in similar habitats.

German and Common wasps present the greatest danger to public health, attack bee hives and compete with and prey on native fauna.

Asian and Australian paper wasps are far less aggressive than the other two wasps, but will defend their nests if disturbed. They also prey on insects (which some gardeners see as a good thing!), and have been known to chew weather boards of buildings for wood fibres which they use to make their nests.

German and Common wasps normally nest underground, though German wasps in particular will sometimes use hollow trees and the walls and roofs of buildings. Their nests can be difficult to find, particularly in bush or scrub country.

Paper wasps build elaborate 'paper mache' nests. These are generally bell shaped and have hexagonal cells. Nests are suspended from branches of shrubs or under the eaves of buildings and hang more or less vertically, so that rain or dripping water cannot enter the open cells.

Wasp identification

German wasp

Vespula germanica

The German Wasp has probably been in New Zealand since the late 1800s, but were not found in any great numbers till the 1940s. It is slightly larger than a honey bee, with a black head and thorax. The abdomen has yellow and black stripes with black spots separate from the central black stripes.



Common wasp

Vespula vulgaris

The Common Wasp arrived more recently than the German Wasp but is already widespread. This wasp is very similar to the German wasp, but can be identified by not having separate black dots on its abdomen. These dots appear to be fused to the black rings on the abdomen.



Asian paper wasp

Polistes chinensis

Asian paper wasps were first discovered in North Auckland in 1979 and have quickly spread through the northern North Island. They are slightly smaller than the German and Common wasps. The Asian paper wasp is also yellow and black striped. Paper wasps fly with their long legs dangling beneath their bodies and this easily identifies them from the German or Common wasp.



Australian paper wasp

Polistes hummulis

Australian paper wasps have been in New Zealand since the 1880s. They are smaller than the Asian Paper wasp and have a black and reddish-brown colouration.



Asian paper wasps and nest

Status as a pest animal in the Bay of Plenty

Wasps are a Restricted Pest Animal (refer to the Bay of Plenty Regional Council Regional Pest Management Plan).

Landowners are not required to control wasps on their property but are encouraged to do so.

What do you do if you discover a wasp nest?

Problem wasp nests on District Council reserves and access ways should be reported to the appropriate council who will arrange for the nest/s to be destroyed. Likewise, nests discovered on Department of Conservation land should be reported to the nearest DOC office or visitor centre.

Nests on private land are the responsibility of the land occupier and the methods for destroying nests are described on reverse.

If you are allergic to insect stings do not attempt to destroy any wasp nests!

How to deal with German and Common wasp nests

Locate their nests – look for wasps' flight path at dawn or dusk on a warm sunny day when large numbers will be leaving or returning to the nest. You can track wasps by first using a plate of cat food to attract them. As they land, sprinkle them with flour to make them more visible. Follow the wasps as far as you can then repeat the process until you find the nest. Be very cautious as you approach the location of the nest.

Do not attempt to kill the nest during daylight hours as wasps are active at this time. Wasp control is best attempted at night or at twilight on cool days – wasps are generally inactive at these times. If using a torch at night time to locate the nest do not hold the torch while carrying out the control as any wasps that may fly will head to the torch.

German wasps sometimes nest in the walls and roofs of buildings. These nests can be very difficult to deal with. The safest control option will probably be to call in a professional pest controller.

1. Insecticides

For nests located in banks, walls and tree trunks, the use of an insecticide is recommended. There are several suitable products available from hardware and garden shops.

2. Fumigants

Nests can be successfully destroyed using a number of rabbit fumigants, many of the products used historically are no longer available, but Magtoxin can still be purchased for this purpose. As the use of fumigants requires manipulating the nest entrance to ensure an effective result, it is recommended that this technique is not used unless you are an experienced pest controller with appropriate safety equipment.

Fumigants can be a cost-effective method of controlling a large number of nests, if you want to

investigate this option please contact a Bay of Plenty Regional Council Land Management Officer who can refer a qualified pest controller to assist you.

How to deal with Asian and Australian paper wasps

Destruction of paper wasp nests is generally easier than dealing with German and Common wasps. Control should only be attempted at dusk, dawn or at night as they are inactive at these times.

To kill the wasps in the nest simply spray it with household flyspray which is very effective in quickly knocking over adult wasps. The nest can then be removed by manoeuvring a plastic or paper bag over the nest and then clipping it off into the bag. Seal the bag and then dispose of it in the rubbish or burn it.

These control techniques rely on the location of the nest being known. However a wasp bait may be available in the future, that will kill flying wasps.

Professional pest controllers

If you are allergic to stings or have any concerns regarding the techniques then it is recommended you hire the services of a professional pest controller. They can be found by searching the yellow pages or you can contact a Bay of Plenty Regional Council Land Management Officer if you would like a recommendation.

First Aid

If you accidentally disturb a wasp nest, you will be lucky to escape without being stung. However, you can minimise the risks of being stung by wearing light coloured clothing, and by sacrificing your food to any scavenging wasps that may be disrupting your picnic.

If you are visiting bush areas, particularly during the warmer summer months, go prepared for a possible wasp sting.

Antihistamine cream and tablets are available from any chemist without prescription and should be carried. If you are allergic to insect stings carry an adrenaline kit as well, and ensure your companions are informed where it is and of its use.

If you are stung, cold pads and antihistamine cream on the area of the sting/s will help reduce swelling and associated pain.

Sting or stings to the mouth and neck area are serious, whether you are allergic or not. They may result in swelling of the throat which may block the airway. Take an antihistamine tablet immediately and seek medical attention.

Do not wait to see if you have an adverse reaction to the sting.



Bay of Plenty Regional Council

5 Quay Street, Whakatāne
1125 Arawa Street, Rotorua
Rata Street, Mount Maunganui

Post: PO Box 364, Whakatāne 3158

Phone: 0800 884 880
Fax: 0800 884 882

Pollution Hotline: 0800 884 883
Email: info@boprc.govt.nz
Website: www.boprc.govt.nz

