

# PestGazette



## When the Weather Warms, the Pests Swarm

When the weather gets warm, we spend more time outside, unfortunately, so do a lot of pests. During the summer, insects tend to move around more, build up bigger colonies, and often visit the same places we do. Most pests are just nuisances, such as the ants that join our picnic, or the gnats that swarm around our outdoor lights, but some pose a serious health threat. One sting from a bee or wasp can be fatal to an allergic person, while filth flies can pose a serious disease threat.

Things you can do to help include: eliminating potential fly breeding sites, being careful around flowers, not leaving open soda cans around, and closing up all garbage in

sealed plastic bags inside metal or plastic containers with tight-fitting lids. You should not wear strong flower-scented perfumes or colognes outdoors, and you should consider wearing a good insect repellent when you go out, especially during the day.

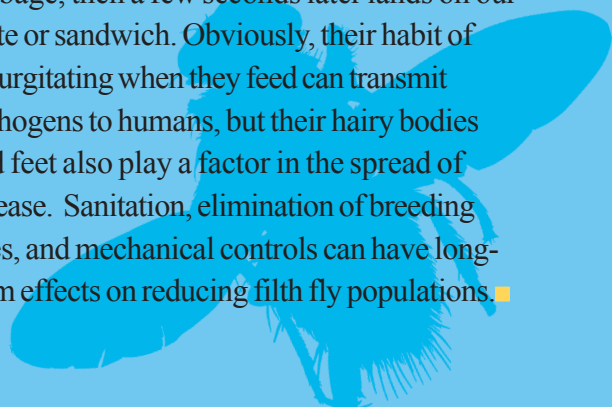
If you are having problems with warm weather pests, our professionals can identify the pests involved, do a thorough survey to find out what and where they are, and how big their population has become, and help you plan and carry out an effective, efficient control program. Call us for assistance with all of your summer pests.

### Filth Flies

**T**hese pests are aptly named. They breed in filth such as moist or decaying organic matter or excrement, and they feed by “spitting out” saliva and former stomach contents onto their next intended meal. After a few seconds, they suck up the regurgitated fluid, along with anything it might have dissolved. Not a pretty sight.

There are about 200 species of filth flies and they have been proven to carry

more than 100 kinds of human diseases including typhoid, E. coli, cholera, polio, TB, “Staph,” intestinal parasites, and several other kinds of food poisoning. Humans can get sick when a fly feeds on filth, such as dung or garbage, then a few seconds later lands on our plate or sandwich. Obviously, their habit of regurgitating when they feed can transmit pathogens to humans, but their hairy bodies and feet also play a factor in the spread of disease. Sanitation, elimination of breeding sites, and mechanical controls can have long-term effects on reducing filth fly populations. ■





**Odorous House Ant**



**Pavement Ant**



**Fire Ant**



**Argentine Ant**

## Ant Awareness

### Odorous House Ant

If your house is suddenly invaded by hundreds of small-to-medium sized, blackish ants, especially just after a heavy rain, you probably have Odorous House Ants. Although these ants nest in walls, their main nest is usually outdoors. Following their trails to a small crack or crevice, or other outside opening, may help confirm that identification. Another way to test is to crush one or two. Odorous House Ants smell like rotting coconut when crushed. Their colonies vary in size, from 300 to 300,000 workers, and may include many queens. These ants feed on a variety of foods, but generally prefer sweets. Workers from different colonies are not hostile to each other, and routinely share the same trails.

### Pavement Ant

If you see lines of small-to-medium sized, blackish ants, trailing along water pipes or utility lines, especially outside, they are very likely to be Pavement Ants. Their average colony contains 3,000 - 4,000 workers, and has several queens. Outside nests are usually located under the edge of a large stone or a sidewalk. They may nest in wall voids, insulation, under a floor or in ground-level masonry. These ants will feed on nearly anything, but often show a preference for meats or greasy foods. They are not usually aggressive toward humans but sometimes bite and cause a very painful sting. Workers of this species can host two different tapeworms.

### Fire Ant

Fire Ants get their name from their painful bites and stings. They are small yellowish-red to black and are located from Virginia to

Florida, and Georgia to California. They usually nest in the ground, but sometimes a partial colony may be located within a structure, usually in a wall near heat or moisture, or in electrical equipment such as transformers and switching boxes. The two most important species are the Red Imported Fire Ant (RIFA) and the Southern Fire Ant.

There may be as many as 30 to 100 colonies per acre, with 80,000 to 250,000 ants per colony. A typical colony mound is rounded, about 18" high and 24" across. Multiple stings can kill farm animals when they step into a mound. When stung, humans develop a blister-like pustule at the site and true allergic reactions can be life threatening. RIFA stings cause more than 30 human deaths a year in the U.S.

### Argentine Ant

Workers of these ants are small, light to dark-brown, and are often associated with transported items like lumber or potted plants. Outdoors, Argentine ants nest in or under almost any material or structure. They are very aggressive, and can drive out almost every other species from a site. Their colonies contain 50,000 - 600,000 individuals. They are omnivorous and will eat any accessible food, but prefer sweets and fruits. Cool weather and heavy rains can sometimes cause Argentine ant colonies to migrate indoors. An Argentine ant colony can suffer the loss of 99 percent of their population and still survive and rebuild. Only about 10 percent of an ant colony's workers are actively foraging outside their nest at any time, so killing ants along trails may not even make a dent in their population. ■

**For help controlling ants, contact us and we'll find a treatment program that's just right for you.**

# Beware of their Bite

## Yellow Jackets

Most yellow jackets are black with yellow stripes, but some have red markings, while others are black with white markings. Like hornets, they build paper-like nests containing several layers of cells. A mature colony may have 2,000 - 6,000 cells and 1,000 - 4,000 workers. Nests are sometimes built in open spots, or within bushes, but most species build their nest in a space dug out below ground. Abandoned rodent burrows are common nesting sites. The entrances are guarded, as they are very protective of their nest. They can quickly become aggressive if their nest is disturbed. Workers can repeatedly inflict painful stings.

## Honeybees

These bees are among the most beneficial insects; yet they can become pests when they get into our living space. Honeybees can sting, which may cause a truly allergic reaction and even death to certain individuals. The much-publicized Africanized honeybees, sometimes called “killer bees,” have become established in warm areas of the southern and southwestern U.S. They seem to be moving further north each year. By midsummer, honeybee colonies may reach very high populations. Infested voids or attics should not be fogged to kill the adult honeybees, because other bees may later reoccupy the same hive, perpetuating the problem.

## Paper Wasps

These stinging insects have narrow bodies, usually brownish with yellow markings, and some have red markings. They build a grayish-colored, single layer, paper-

like comb with cells opening downward, and attached by a single long part to a twig, tree branch, or horizontal surface such as a window frame. Workers are quite protective of their nest and will give painful stings if disturbed. The *Dominulus* Paper Wasp is a new species of paper wasps recently introduced from Europe. These wasps look very much like some common species of yellow jackets, and may behave like them, too. This species reuses the same paper nest year after year and can have very large populations around one large nest in a few years.

## Bald-faced & European Hornets

Bald-faced hornets are black with light yellow to white markings. European hornets are very large and are brown with yellow abdominal stripes and a pale face. Bald-faced and European hornets build large usually grayish or brownish-colored “paper carton” aerial nests, often as large as a basketball. Bald-faced hornet’s nests usually hang in an exposed location such as a tree, while nests of the European hornet are often located in some protected area, like a wall, attic or within the branches of a bush. Workers of both species protect their nests and give a painful sting, sometimes repeated stings, if they or their nest are disturbed. ■



**Call us today and we'll be happy to discuss the treatments that we offer and the advantages each method provides.**

## Spiders

At this time of year, a variety of spiders may show up on your garden or ornamental plants, around outdoor lights, or even inside your home. Most outdoor spiders do not pose any health risks and are generally helpful because they prey on a lot of insects, many of which are pests. All spiders have venom and use it to subdue their prey, as well as to pre-digest their prey's body contents. Spiders actually have voluntary control of how much venom they inject during a bite — sometimes not injecting any venom at all. Only a few spider species live near or inside humans' homes, bite people or have venom which can cause humans harm. ■

## Bee Sting Basics



In most cases, bee stings begin and end with the sting itself ... a moment of sharp pain followed by mild soreness. But many people are particularly sensitive to bee stings. For them, symptoms may include swelling around the eyes, lips, tongue, or

throat; coughing or wheezing; or numbness or cramping. In some extreme cases, speech may be slurred and the person stung may experience difficulty breathing, anxiety, mental confusion, nausea, vomiting, or even loss of consciousness. ■

### First Aid for a Bee Sting:

- 1** Remove the stinger as quickly as you can. The longer a bee's stinger is in your skin, the more likely it is that the area will become sore. Use a credit card or something with a stiff edge to scrape away the stinger. If tweezers are used, they could "pump" in more venom from the attached sac.
- 2** Wash the area with soap and water. Then apply an ice pack for 15 minutes or so to minimize swelling and relieve pain.
- 3** See your doctor if you notice that you have developed symptoms away from the sting site.

## All About Earwigs

**A**dult earwigs are small, 1/4" to 1" long, usually pale brown to reddish-brown, elongate, flattened insects which have a pair of curved, pointed, pincer-like cerci at the back end of their body. Earwigs got their common name from an old European superstition about them crawling into people's ears while they slept.



Fortunately, this is not true. They usually live in very moist places, which contain high organic matter, like in leaf litter or mulch. They are nocturnal and feed on a variety of organic matter. They are strong fliers and are attracted to outdoor lights at night. Some species may sometimes feed on and damage soft parts of plants, especially in greenhouses. If mashed or disturbed, they can give off a disagreeable odor. Earwigs will sometimes invade homes or other buildings, causing mainly nuisance pest problems by their presence. The European earwig is the most widespread and common of these "occasional invader" household pests. ■