

Advices on WASPS

Luxembourg - 2022



Ëmweltberodung Lëtzebuerg asbl

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Why protect wasps?



In Luxembourg:



- more than 300 wasp species
- of which **15 are social species** (forming colonies and living together in nests)
→ all other species are solitary
- only **2 species** represent a **potential conflict** for humans

Wasps are useful animals that play a **fundamental role in the balance of nature.**



They **pollinate** the flowers.



They act as "**sanitary police**" by hunting insects, making them natural **pest control** agents.

→ *free insecticides!*

Objective:

To tolerate nests in non-problematic areas.

- With the right behaviour, there is little danger!
→ *Contrary to popular belief, they very rarely sting.*
- Wasps easily adapt to humans.
As soon as they are used to your voice and habits they are no longer disturbed by your presence.
- In the vast majority of cases, coexistence between humans and wasps is not problematic.



→ *Exception: presence of an allergic person.*

- Furthermore, the unjustified **destruction** of nests is **prohibited** by the "Nature Protection Law". Nests that do not represent a direct danger are therefore not allowed to be destroyed.



Life cycle of social wasps

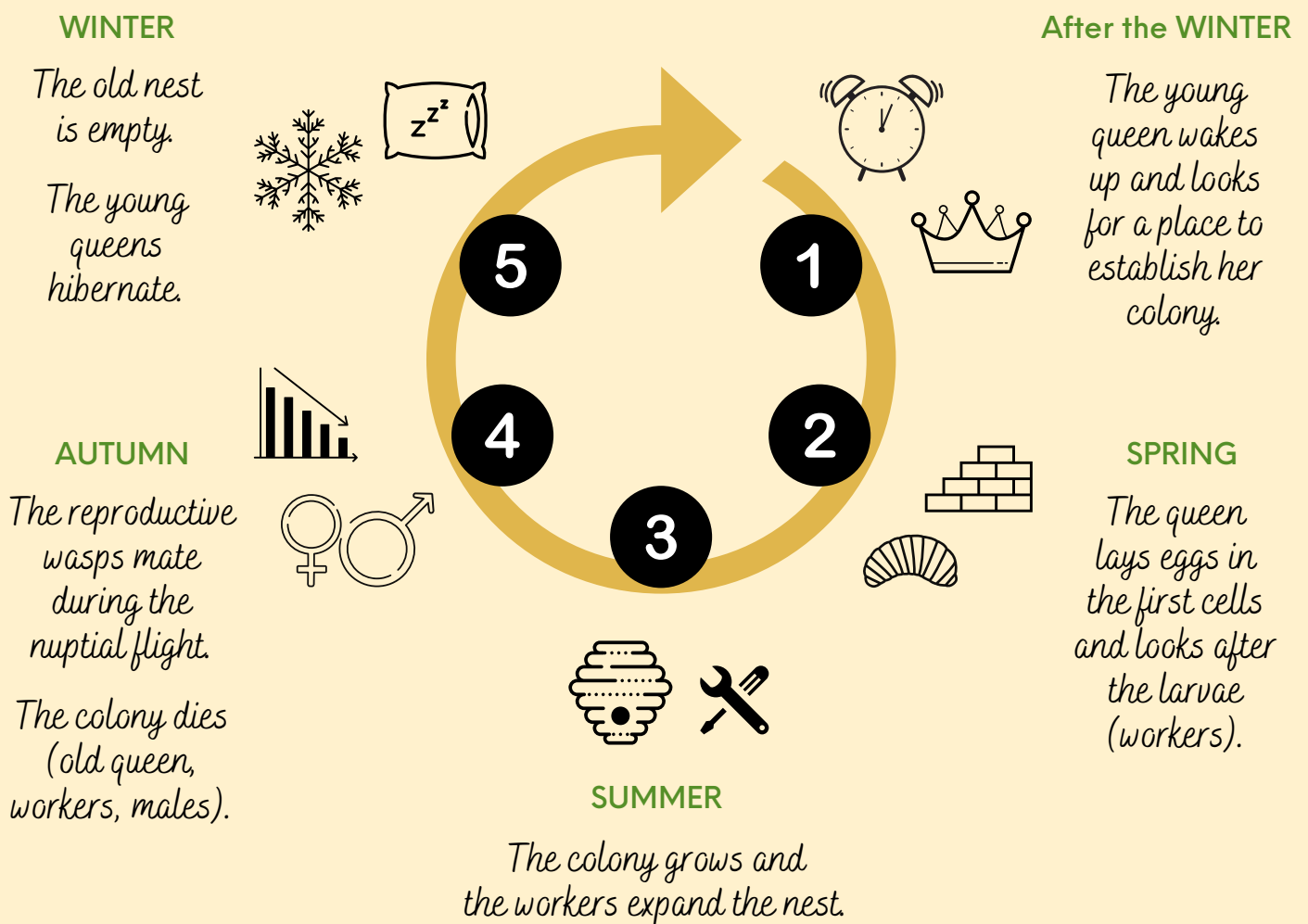


Social wasps live in **colonies**. They build a **nest**, more or less elaborate, which can contain several thousand individuals at the end of the season.

↳ *They are the ones who "pester" us throughout the summer.*



The colony is organised around a **queen** (fertile) and **workers** (sterile), with the birth of fertile males and females at a specific time of the year.



The majority of wasp species (90 %) are **solitary wasps**: they live and work alone, there is no distinction between queen and workers.

The wasp nest



The nest is made of "papier-mâché", greyish/brown in colour. The wasp makes this pulp of vegetable fibres by mixing its saliva with **cellulose** (the main constituent of wood) which it collects by trimming old wood and bark very superficially.



Their nests can be found almost anywhere, occupying all or part of the available volume, while taking on the shape of the support.



Each year, the wasps abandon their old paper nest and build a new one the following spring.

These nests are therefore **single use** and will never be recolonised the following year.



..... If there were only one thing to remember

about wasp nests

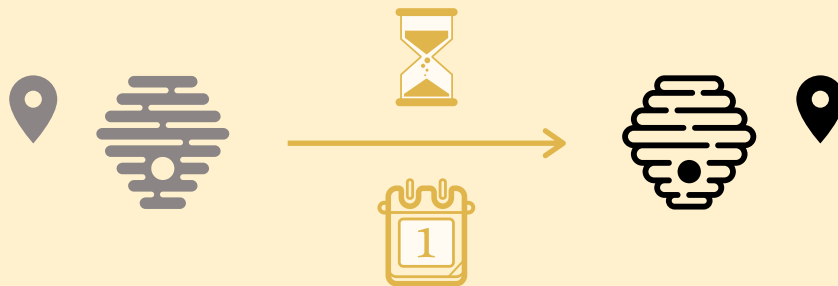


A wasp nest is only used for one season: it is a one-time use and is not reused the following year.

At the end of the season, the colony dies and the new queens abandon their old nest.

In spring, the queens will build a new nest in a new location.

So, if you have a nest on your property, it will be empty at the earliest in July / at the latest in November.



When will the nest be empty?

This depends on the wasp species. In general:



(e.g. hanging freely in a bush or under the roof of a shed)

→ often a "non-problematic" species
(**disappears early** / not annoying)



(e.g. in shutter box or under tiles)

→ often a **longer-lived** species
which can become annoying in late summer

How to cohabit with wasps?



Wasps only sting when they feel threatened.
So: Stay calm and avoid **sudden movements**.



Never blow on a wasp to chase it away:
CO2 in the breath is a warning signal for these insects.



If you keep a **distance** of 2-3 metres from the nest and do not block the wasps' **flight path**, they have no reason to feel threatened.



Do not block the **passage** to the nest, as the wasps will look for another way out, which could be even more problematic. In addition, the colony will behave more aggressively.



*If wasps have settled in a problem area,
contact an expert for advice..*



- Generally, cohabitation is possible until the colony declines.



- Sometimes - but rarely - it is possible to move a nest (this is a complicated operation)..



- If killing is unavoidable and you call in a private agency to carry out the removal, be sure to ask about precautions to be taken after the application of the poison. In particular, when disposing of a colony in a shutter box, contamination of the indoor air may occur and exposure should be avoided for some time.



The wasps die during the first frosts of autumn.
You can then safely **remove the old nest** if you wish.
Ideally: clean the area thoroughly, as new queens may be attracted by the smell.

How to cohabit with wasps?



IN THE HOUSE



To avoid wasps in the house:
attach **screens** to windows and doors.
(priority: kitchen, bathroom, children's rooms)



A wasp in the house? Tip:
Place a glass over the insect and slide a piece of paper
underneath to carry the wasp outside.

OUTSIDE



Cover the **food** and dispose of the leftovers as soon as possible.
Important: Keep an eye on your drink!
Wipe children's mouths after eating.



If necessary: Place "**distracting foods**" at a distance.
Ideal: overripe grapes.

*Not recommended: wasp traps filled with sugar juice or beer.
The wasps die horribly and it is mainly the older wasps that enter the trap
(the active colony is not decimated).*



Wasps are attracted to brightly **coloured clothing**.
So, if necessary: choose white.



Have you been **stung**? Tip:
Press slices of onion (anti-inflammatory) on the sting.



Plant **wild flowers** in your garden, so that you have a natural
food supply for the wasps and they are less interested in your
own meals.



Wasps can slightly damage wooden surfaces as they use the
cellulose in the wood to build their nests.
If necessary: Maintain your **wooden coatings** with
environmentally friendly varnishes/paints.



Unwanted summer visitors



Wasps are disturbing me during my meals on the terrace!



Restez calme / évitez les mouvements brusques.
Une guêpe n'attaque pas les humains, tant qu'elle ne se sent pas menacée.



Ne soufflez jamais sur une guêpe pour la chasser
(le CO₂ de notre respiration = signal d'alerte pour les guêpes).



Très important: gardez un oeil sur votre boisson!
Débarrassez les restes de nourriture de la table dès que possible.



Prévention: - Plantez des fleurs sauvages dans le jardin (réserve naturelle de nourriture).
- Les vêtements de couleur vive attirent les guêpes (privilégiez le blanc).
- Certaines herbes ont un effet répulsif sur les guêpes (p.ex. le basilic).

Help, there is a wasp nest in my living space!



Pas de panique: avec le bon comportement il n'y a pas de danger, même à proximité du nid.
(pas de mouvements brusques et de vibrations près du nid / ne pas obstruer l'entrée)



Un nid de guêpes ne sert que pendant une saison.
Au plus tard en novembre le nid sera vide et les hôtes ne reviendront pas.



Si vous avez besoin d'aide, le Luxembourg dispose d'un réseau national de conseillers bénévoles pour les cas de guêpes.
Contact: natur@emwelt (Conseil nature) / Umweltberatung Lëtzebuerg a.s.b.l.

Prévention (dès le mois de mai!): Découvrez le nid avant qu'il ne soit trop grand:

- Activez régulièrement les volets de vos fenêtres.
- Surveillez les endroits sombres (remises, cabanes, ...).



Wasps are useful insects and do not sting as long as they are not threatened.



Thanks!



The emergency services (112) only intervene in case of an emergency that represents a serious danger for a citizen!

We, the wasp advisors, are here to help you!
More info:
natur@emwelt.lu
ebl.lu



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In collaboration with:



What the law says



Legislation – Law of 18 July 2018.

Protection of nature and natural resources

Art. 19.

Interdictions d'atteintes aux espèces animales sauvages

Sont interdites toutes exploitation, utilisation, mutilation ou destruction non justifiées d'espèces animales sauvages. Toute manipulation d'individus de ces espèces doit se faire dans des conditions conformes aux impératifs biologiques de leur espèce et au respect de leur bien-être.

Art. 28.

Déroptions à la protection des espèces

Le ministre peut accorder des autorisations portant dérogation aux dispositions des articles 18, 19, 20 et 21 dans un but scientifique, pédagogique ou d'utilité publique ou, en ce qui concerne les espèces protégées particulièrement, uniquement selon un des motifs du paragraphe 2. Les autorisations portant dérogation sont accordées sur avis préalable de l'Administration de la nature et des forêts, qui est chargée de donner son avis sur la pertinence desdites dérogations, de déterminer les conditions et modalités de leur mise en œuvre et d'en assurer le contrôle administratif et le suivi scientifique.



You are not responsible for the nest and its consequences (e.g. to your neighbours), unless you deliberately placed it there.



Identification



Wasps are **insects** belonging to the order **Hymenoptera**. They are black and yellow with characteristic spots and patterns for each species.

Les **nombreuses espèces** de guêpes peuvent être classées en **3 genres** différents:



VESPULA



DOLICHOVESPULA



VESPA
(hornets)

How to identify the gender of a wasp?

Identification is not usually easy with the naked eye.



The distance between the eye and the jaw (the 'cheek') can be used to differentiate between **VESPULA** (shorter cheek) and **DOLICHOVESPULA** (longer cheek) wasps.

Ideally, to identify the species, the nest should be observed:

- **VESPULA** wasps often nest in a dark, confined area (e.g. in the shutter box, false ceiling or under the terrace).
- The nests of **DOLICHOVESPULA** are often freely suspended (e.g. from a tree, on the roof of a terrace, under a table ...).



Hornets (**VESPA**) are relatively easy to identify, since they are larger in size (this can exceed 3 cm).



Identification gives us information on the life span and on the behaviour of the wasp and its colony.

Vespula



The small but telling detail:

In VESPULA species, the distance between the eye and the jaw is very small or absent: the eyes almost touch the mandibles.

The "hidden" nest:

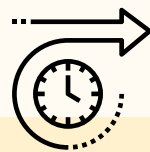
VESPULA wasps often nest in a dark, confined place (e.g. in a shutter box, in a false ceiling, under a terrace, under tiles ...).

Appearance: grey or ochre/brown "shells".

Large colony: thousands of individuals.



Life span and behaviour



- Long life cycle: active until late October / mid-November.
- Generally non-aggressive, except in the vicinity of their nests. But: These species can become annoying in late summer by invading the table during meals.



Dolichovespula



The small but telling detail:

In DOLICHOVESPULA the head is more elongated than in VESPULA. This means that the distance between the eye and the jaw is greater.

The "hanging" nest:

The nests of DOLICHOVESPULA are often freely suspended (e.g. from a tree, in a bush, under the roof of a under the roof of a terrace or shed, under a table ...).

Appearance: slightly arched parallel veins.

Medium-sized colony: hundreds of individuals.



Life span and behaviour



- Short life cycle: active until the end of July / August.
- They are "non-problematic", peaceful species. Not annoying, they do not invade the table during meals. Cohabitation with humans is easy.



Vespa (hornets)



The small but telling detail:

Hornets are the largest members of the wasp family. They can be more than 3 centimetres in size.

The hornet's nest:

VESPA nests are often located in the shade and in high places. E.g. under a roof, in an attic, in the top of a tree ...

Appearance: ochre / brown (with air pockets) + opening on the underside.

Medium sized colony: hundreds of individuals.



Life span and behaviour



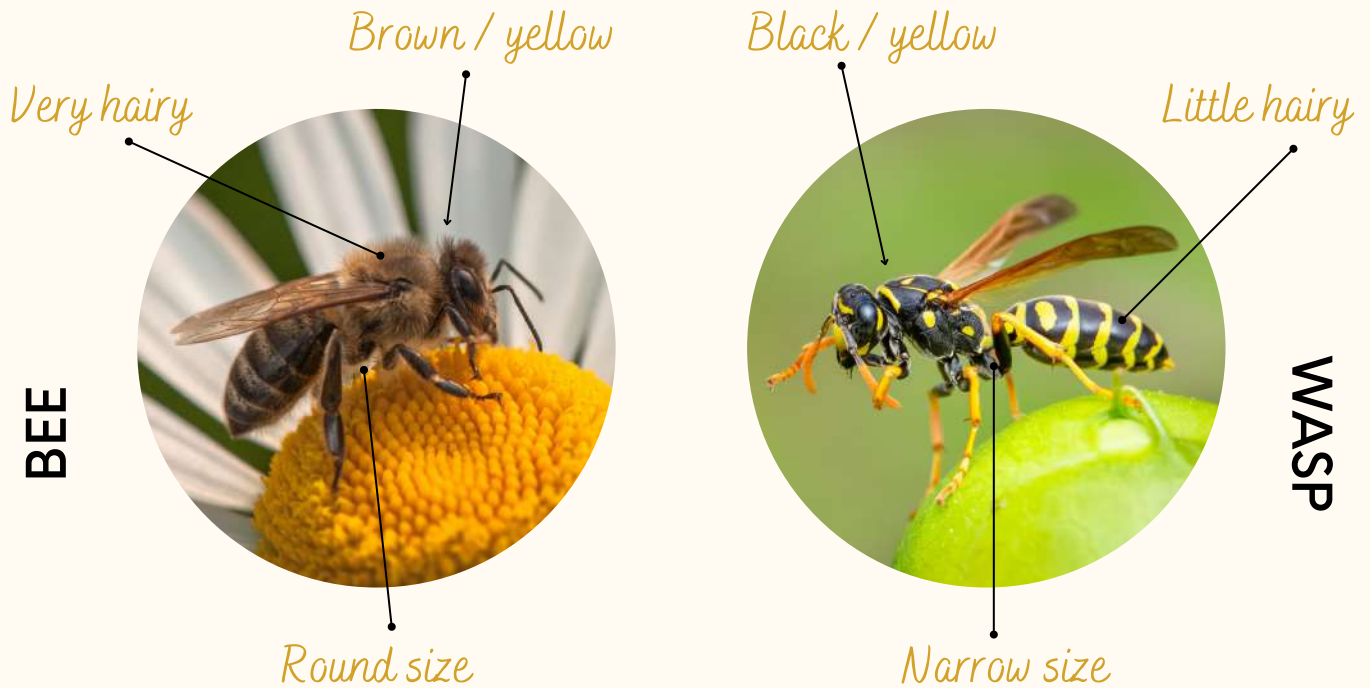
- Long life cycle: active until October / November.
- Hornets are peaceful, contrary to popular belief. Not annoying, they do not invade the table during meals.
- Nocturnal, hornets are attracted to light in the evening.



What about bees?



Sometimes a colony of **bees** is mistaken for a colony of **wasps**.



In spring, part of the population of a bee hive may leave the hive to found a new colony elsewhere.

The swarm of bees may choose to settle in your garden, your chimney, behind shutters...

Don't panic, don't kill them: call a beekeeper.

Bees are protected species by law and the fire brigade or pest control companies are not allowed to destroy them.

Solution:

Call a local beekeeper who agrees to to come and collect the swarm to increase his stock.



Wasp advisory network



In Luxembourg, the association **natur&ëmwelt** (naturemwelt.lu) is an important contact for wasps.

In addition, due to the large number of calls concerning wasp nests, a **national network of wasp advisors** was created in 2019.

This network is made up of **volunteer advisors** who are willing to provide information and raise awareness.

In the vast majority of cases, simple guidance measures (without intervention) solve the problem.

Destruction of the nest is rarely necessary and should be considered as a last resort.

You can obtain the contact details of local advisors from natur&ëmwelt, municipalities, nature conservation centres, nature parks, biological stations or from the Umweltberodung Lëtzebuerg (ebl.lu).

Before calling an advisor, please collect the following information:

Location of the nest, approximate size of the nest, behaviour of the colony, potential dangers

Please note: The advisors will not destroy the nests under any circumstances!



Frequently asked questions



Does a nest cause damage, e.g. to shutter boxes ? Should the old nest be removed ?

Generally, there is little or no damage. However, it can happen that the wasps nibble at the shutter tape or block the system with dirt. It can also happen that a nest damages the insulation.

Ôter l'ancien nid n'est donc généralement pas nécessaire. Si on souhaite l'enlever, il vaut toujours mieux attendre jusqu'en décembre et la chute des températures, pour s'assurer que le nid est bien vide.



What to do if there are allergic persons ?

If the wasps are of the "Vespula" type and the allergic person is likely to be in the vicinity of the nest, the nest can of course be destroyed.

Note: Many people believe they are allergic without actually being allergic, e.g. by overinterpreting 'classic' reactions to stings (redness, etc.).

An allergy test can help to clarify this.



In which cases can the nest be relocated ?

Relocation is possible in cases where the nest is attached to a mobile structure. It is however necessary to protect oneself correctly (beekeeper's jacket, gloves)!

Relocation should only be considered if the danger is under control and the current location of the nest is really problematic..



In which cases is an extermination conceivable ?

If we can avoid the extermination of the non-dangerous Dolichovespula wasps, which have a short life cycle, then we are already taking a big step towards nature conservation. With regard to the "Vespula" type wasps, which can persist until November, the decision to call in a company to destroy the nest is understandable in cases where the nest is in a very disturbing place, where there is an allergic person present, etc. ...



Do wasps sleep at night ?

Wasp activity is very low at night; the colony remains in its nest, except for the "late wasps" which sleep outside the nest (until the morning). The activity of the wasps resumes in the early morning (before most humans wake up).

Exception: hornets are the only wasp species that also fly at night.

Frequently asked questions



Can I call the fire brigade to come and remove a wasp nest ?

Since the reform of the emergency services in 2018, the removal of wasp nests is no longer one of the main tasks of the CGDIS, except in cases of real and imminent danger to the population.



How can I prevent wasps from building a nest in my home ?

The queen wasp lays the foundations of her nest from mid-April and, until early June, the majority of nests are still in the early stages of construction. Therefore, there are a few simple preventive measures to prevent the colony from settling in your home:

- Activate the roller shutters in your home every day; this will disturb any queens that try to settle in a shutter box.
- Outside, go around your house at least once a week to inspect dark corners (garden sheds, sheds, covered terraces, etc.).
- In particularly hard-to-reach places (e.g. under terrace boards), essential oils can be used as a preventive measure, such as clove, eucalyptus, tea tree, cedar, lemon or walnut..

If you discover a queen laying the first foundations of a nest in a problematic place, you can disturb her (without hurting her) so that she decides to look for another place.





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