

## WHAT CAN YOU DO TO PREVENT YELLOWJACKET PROBLEMS?

You can help reduce food and water available to yellowjackets by:

- Tightly covering garbage containers
- Properly maintaining compost piles
- Tightly covering can and bottle recycling bins
- Not leaving pet food outside
- Placing pheromone traps in early spring to capture queens

## HOW TO AVOID GETTING STUNG

- Do **NOT** disturb the nest
- Don't swat with your hands
- Use lids on soft drinks
- Keep garbage away from eating areas
- If eating outside, check food before placing it in your mouth
- Avoid using items yellowjackets may be attracted to (perfume and other scents, hair spray, heavily scented suntan lotion, and brightly colored clothing)
- If exposed to large numbers of yellowjackets, leave the area quickly and use clothes to protect your eyes and mouth

## IF YOU ARE STUNG

- Contact a physician or call 911 immediately

## ABOUT CONTRA COSTA MOSQUITO & VECTOR CONTROL DISTRICT

### Protecting Public Health Since 1927

Early in the 1900s, Northern California suffered through epidemics of encephalitis and malaria, and severe outbreaks of saltwater mosquitoes. At times, parts of Contra Costa County were considered uninhabitable resulting in the closure of waterfront areas and schools during peak mosquito seasons. Recreational areas were abandoned and Realtors had trouble selling homes. The general economy suffered. As a result, residents established the Contra Costa Mosquito Abatement District which began service in 1927.

Today, the Contra Costa Mosquito and Vector Control District continues to protect public health with environmentally sound techniques, reliable and efficient services, as well as programs to combat emerging diseases, all while preserving and/or enhancing the environment.

#### Contra Costa Mosquito & Vector Control District Services for Contra Costa County Residents

<b>MOSQUITOES</b> Inspection and control	<b>TICKS</b> Tick identification
<b>MOSQUITOFISH</b> For residential ponds	<b>RATS AND MICE</b> Inspection and advice
<b>YELLOWJACKETS</b> Ground-nesting only	<b>SKUNKS</b> Inspection and assistance
<b>BEEES</b> Inspection and education	<b>PUBLIC EDUCATION</b> Literature and presentations

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## INSPECTION REPORT

A District employee has responded to your service request and investigated the pest problem.

### TREATMENT

YES  NO \_\_\_ nest needs to be marked  
\_\_\_ not a ground-nest  
\_\_\_ not yellowjackets

REMARKS: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

### AVOID TREATED AREA

Worker wasps that were foraging while control was taking place may return to the treated nest. Immature yellowjackets may hatch from treated nests and then disperse. We suggest that you keep your family and pets away from the area for 8 hours. If nest activity persists after one week, please call our District office at (925) 685-9301.

### IF YOU HAVE ALREADY COME INTO DIRECT CONTACT WITH YELLOWJACKETS

Wash all clothing worn at the time of exposure to yellowjackets. When threatened, yellowjackets may release a pheromone onto a person and their clothing that is undetectable to people but attracts other yellowjackets to the area. These yellowjackets may sting and bite. Pets that have been in contact with yellowjackets should be bathed immediately for the same reason.

*Thank you for your cooperation*

\_\_\_\_\_  
**District Employee's Name**

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Date**                      **Time**

# YELLOWJACKET CONTROL





## WHAT ARE YELLOWJACKETS?

"Yellowjacket" is the common name for several species of wasps. These wasps can become a nuisance around our homes, gardens, pools, orchards, and parks. They can also pose a health hazard, especially for those who are allergic to their venom.

### WHAT DO THEY EAT?

Yellowjackets are attracted to and eat sweet foods such as honey, candy, fruit, and soft drinks. For protein to feed their young, they hunt other insects and spiders and therefore can be considered beneficial to humans. Pest species will also collect red meat, chicken, fish, and even pet food. Ground-nesting species are more likely to become pests than aerial nesters, which feed mainly on other insects.

### WHERE DO THEY LIVE?

Yellowjackets live in colonies (actually large families) housed in nests. Some species attach the nest to trees, shrubs, or buildings. Native pest species usually construct nests underground, often in old rodent burrows and ground holes. The Western yellowjacket (*Vespula pensylvanica*) is one common ground-nesting pest species in our county. These wasps can be observed returning food to the colony as they enter a hole in the ground.



## YELLOWJACKETS

Yellowjackets are beneficial insects that eat garden pests and pollinate crops through daily foraging. If left undisturbed, yellowjackets normally should not be a problem. However, these wasps will defend their nest if they sense a threat to the colony. When a nest is disturbed, yellowjackets can inflict multiple stings that are painful and may be life threatening for individuals hypersensitive to wasp venom.

## YELLOWJACKET SERVICES

### GROUND-NESTING YELLOWJACKETS ONLY

Homeowners, business owners, city and county personnel or any group in Contra Costa County can request yellowjacket service. Please see **YELLOWJACKET SERVICE GUIDELINES** in this pamphlet for further details.

## HOW DO YELLOWJACKETS BUILD THE NEST?

Nests are constructed from paper. Yellowjackets make a pulp by gathering wood or plant fibers, chewing it up and mixing in some of their own saliva. When the pulp is spread out it dries to form paper. The inner core of the nest is a series of horizontal combs which contain many six-sided cells used for rearing immatures. The core is surrounded by a spherical envelope of overlapping sheets of paper.



In the spring the queen begins construction of a new nest, or she may use a nest built in a previous year to raise her first brood which consists of workers. As workers are produced the nest is enlarged. By the end of summer the nest may contain several tiers of cells. New queens and males are produced in late fall. They mate and the new queens seek shelter during winter where they wait until spring to begin the new cycle.

## WHAT TO DO IF YOU FIND A YELLOWJACKET NEST

Avoid the area. If the nest is in an area that can't be avoided and is a ground-nesting yellowjacket species, call the District for service. Please follow the directions listed under **YELLOWJACKET SERVICE GUIDELINES**.

### FOR OTHER NESTS (trees, shrubs, or buildings)

Contact a licensed private pest control agency. If you cannot find a nest, but are still being bothered by yellowjackets, the use of food or pheromone (odor) baited traps may help to reduce the problem. These traps are available at most hardware and garden stores. Traps should be located away from the house at the edges of the property to reduce contact with people. Follow the instructions provided with the trap and change the bait frequently (stale bait quickly loses its attractiveness). Setting traps early in the year (late February and March) can prevent problems later in the year by removing queens before they can establish a nest.

## YELLOWJACKET SERVICE GUIDELINES

### GROUND-NESTING YELLOWJACKETS ONLY

Call the District to request service. A District employee will respond and/or treat the nest with pesticides usually within five business days. Please attach a map of the property/area showing the location of the nest on the front door or front gate so the District employee can locate it easily. To locate the nest, simply observe the area where the yellowjackets exit and return (in the ground, shrubbery, pile of leaves, debris, etc.). The District employee must know the location of the nest or it will not be treated. Pets may return to the area in accordance with the pesticide label.

**The District only treats dry ground-nests. If you or someone working for you has recently tried to treat the suspected nest with a liquid or any other substance, please wait a few days to let the nest dry before contacting the District.**