

# Wasps/yellowjackets

*Vespula spp\**



## KEY FEATURES



Western yellowjacket



German wasp



Common wasp



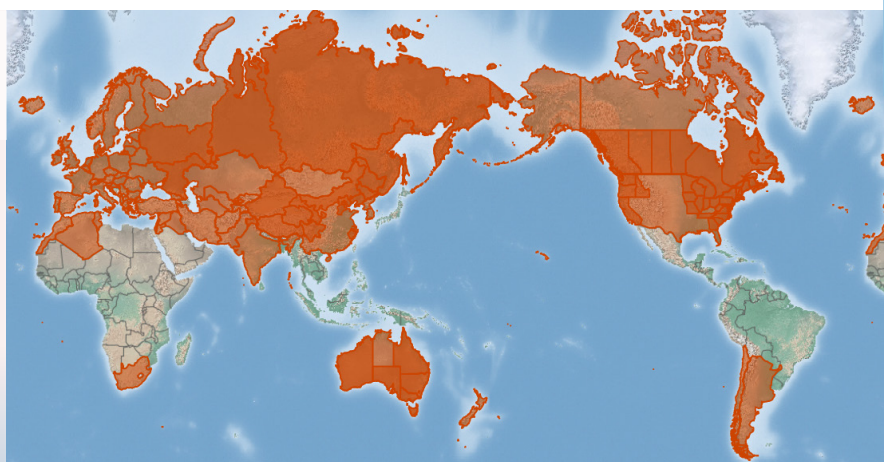
- Known as yellowjackets in north America and wasps elsewhere, *Vespula* have similar impacts, habitats and pathways
- All wasps are predators and will eat almost anything
- Common wasp has a distinctive “anchor” down the centre of the face
- All have high potential for dispersal and colonization of new territories, particularly via shipping, planes and road vehicles
- Wasps have a life history that includes a hibernating, adult female able to establish a new colony alone. These “queens”, which usually stay in the nest, are larger (~ 20 mm) than the “worker” wasps (~10–15 mm – images on left) that are commonly seen
- Build nests (image on left) underground or hidden away behind retaining walls and rockeries in gardens, in cavity walls or roof spaces in buildings and abandoned burrows of rodents or rabbits. Sometimes build an exposed nest



## PATHWAYS

- Shipping
- Timber/forestry
- Machinery

Present



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## IMPACTS



### Environment

Competes with small mammals and birds for nesting hollows. Preys on other birds' eggs and chicks, and sometimes attacks adults of small birds. A threat to native animals, especially on islands. Carrier of Avian malaria.



### Health

Large numbers roosting on roofs can potentially contaminate water supplies. Can carry bird mites that can cause dermatitis, asthma, severe irritation and rashes. Can carry arboviruses that can be transmitted to people through insect bites.



### Society and Culture

Not reported, but impacts on native animals will have flow-on cultural impacts if these species are of cultural importance.



### Economy

Flocks can damage fruit crops, including papaya, mangoes, bananas, carambole (star fruit), java apple, golden apple, tomato, chilli and other cultivated fruits.

## DISTRIBUTION

### Ranges

All of Europe, Iceland, most of continental Asia, United States, Canada, most of Mexico, Hawai'i (Kaua'i, O'ahu, Maui, Moloka'i and Hawai'i), Argentina, Chile, Australia, New Zealand, South Africa, parts of northern Africa and the Middle East

\* This factsheet describes three closely related species, the common wasp (*Vespula vulgaris*), the western yellowjacket (*Vespula pensylvanica*) and German wasp (*Vespula germanica*). They have similar impacts and look similar. As their native and introduced ranges all differ, the entire range of all species is described here

### SOURCES

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Text and map: *Vespula germanica* (German wasp) – CABI <https://www.cabi.org/isc/datasheet/56667>  
*Vespula vulgaris* (common wasp) – CABI <https://www.cabi.org/isc/datasheet/56675>  
*Vespula pensylvanica* (western yellowjacket) – CABI <https://www.cabi.org/isc/datasheet/56670>



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