

Stinging Insects (Bees, hornets, wasps):

During the summer and fall months several County facilities experience infestations of hornets, yellow jackets and other types of stinging insects. These insects are especially a problem at the County fairgrounds and at the Waste and Recovery Center (WARC). These insects can pose a serious threat to public and employee safety. To protect employees and the public, Thurston County has to periodically control these pests.

PRESCRIPTION:

MONITORING

Monitor facility grounds for stinging insects and nests throughout the spring, summer, and fall months. When stinging insects are seen in an area, a thorough search for above ground and below ground nesting sites will be conducted. The location of the nest and proximity to staff and publicly accessed areas will determine which control option is most appropriate.

INJURY / ACTION LEVEL

Public and staff safety is the key factor in deciding on a control strategy. Nests in locations where staff or the public's exposure to stinging insects is determined to be high will require control. Nests located away from operating areas will be tolerated.

CONTROL STRATEGIES

Preventative measures:

- Use of pheromone traps in the spring and early summer to capture queen bees can help to reduce the number of new nests in areas where bees are known to colonize (County fairgrounds, Waste and Recovery Center recycling bins, etc.).
- Use of lidded garbage and recycling collection containers at outdoor public facilities that serve food and beverages.
- Post signs warning the public and staff to avoid a nest that is located in an area expected to have little staff or public use.

When a nest is located in an area that staff or the public are expected to frequent, the following procedures may take place:

Nest Removal

- Above ground nests may be knocked down early in the season to get the colony to move elsewhere.
- Call a local bee collector [Mike Juhl at (360) 866-1834]. The collector may come out and trap the stinging insects or remove the nest.
- After a nest has been removed, the area will be cleaned with soap and water or hosed down to remove any residual pheromones and reduce the chance for a new nest being built in the same area.

If following the above procedures does not effectively keep the number of stinging insects at safe levels, the following will occur:

Nest Treatment

- If the nest locations are known and the collector's efforts or the traps are shown to be ineffective, then the nests may be sprayed with an insecticide product that the Environmental Health Division has reviewed and has passed the pesticide review criteria.
- When a pesticide is used, a sign informing the public of its use will be posted.

After Treatment

- The treatment area will be monitored for several days to determine whether the treatment has lowered the level of infestation. If stinging insects are still present, the area will be searched for more nests which will be controlled as needed.