



Media Release

15 January 2018

Call for vigilance as another European wasp nest found in City of Cockburn

An active European wasp nest found and destroyed in an Aubin Grove banksia woodland in the first week of January, has taken the number of nests detected in the City of Cockburn since July 2016, to 23.

The City is one of three metropolitan hot spots for the declared pest which has reared its head locally on a regular basis since 2013 when an established nest was found in Munster.

With the Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development (DPIRD), the City has been a member of the European Wasp Working Group since 2011, helping monitor more than 400 local surveillance traps.

The City wants local residents to remain vigilant about detecting the exotic pest by familiarising themselves with its appearance and their nests, reporting their locations or activity and adopting a monitoring trap provided by DPIRD.

Cockburn Environmental Health Coordinator Phil Oorjitham said several people had volunteered for the DPIRD Adopt-a-Trap initiative since 2011, and he encouraged more to get on board during the active months of summer and autumn.

“Volunteers regularly set traps with a non-toxic protein lure and check them for European wasps. They can display their traps on the MyPestGuide website, which uses GPS technology to database nests, traps and wasp activity,” Mr Oorjitham said.

Since the first European wasp was detected sitting on a scone in WA 41 years ago by a visiting English entomologist who was about to eat it, WA has managed to remain relatively free of the pest. It is established in South Australia, New South Wales, the Australian Capital Territory, Victoria and Tasmania, and New Zealand.

DPIRD Senior technical Office Marc Widmer said despite having higher numbers of nest discoveries than other metropolitan shires, Cockburn was no more conducive to European wasp spread than the rest of southern WA.



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“A few years ago, one nest was undiscovered within the City of Cockburn, allowing it to mature and release queen wasps that established new nests which the department has continued to track down and remove,” Mr Widmer said.

“Each year, fertilised wasp queens arrive in WA via freight and cargo from the eastern states. The queens spread to find suitable places to start new, mainly underground nests which become large and can house many thousands of wasps.

“Without ongoing surveillance trapping and public reporting, European wasps would become established in WA. This is why the help of Local Government and members of the community in trapping and reporting is so important.”

“The wasps pose three distinct threats to WA – agricultural, environmental and to the general public.

“High wasp population densities would threaten our outdoor lifestyle, tourism, human health and the wellbeing of our pets and livestock.

“They’re hazardous when caught in clothing, in large numbers and when people are near their nests.

“Horticulture, viticulture and apiculture industries would also suffer. The wasp destroys beehives, impacting on plant and crop pollination and the honey industry.

“They damage soft fruits, such as grapes and stone fruit, breaking their skin and reducing the crop’s value.

“They are predators and scavengers and commonly land on people’s and pet’s food and inside drink containers, which makes them a stinging threat,” he said.

Their attraction to protein is particular to European wasps so people who see wasps on barbecue meat, pet food or fish are asked to report them.

More information about European wasps is available at dpird.wa.gov.au

To ‘Adopt a Trap’ or report a suspect wasp sighting, call the Pest and Disease Information Service on +61 (08) 9368 3080, or email padis@dpird.wa.gov.au

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Download the [MyPestGuide Reporter](#) app to your smart device and report suspect wasps by including photos, a description and the GPS coordinates. MyPestGuide Reporter can be downloaded from the [App Store](#), and [Google Play](#).



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