

Wisconsin Apiary Program

Pest Alert

Asian Giant Hornet



Photo credit: Washington State Department of Agriculture

Status: Not currently found in Wisconsin

Where has it been detected?

In late 2019, the Asian giant hornet (native to Asia) was detected in Washington state and British Columbia, Canada. It has not been detected in Wisconsin or anywhere else in North America.

What do beekeepers need to know?

AGH does not generally attack people or pets, unless provoked or their nest is threatened. They do however attack and destroy honey bee hives. A group of 30 hornets can destroy an entire hive of 30,000 bees in less than four hours. The hornets enter a slaughter phase where they kill bees by decapitating them. They then defend the hive as their own, taking the brood to feed their own young. They also attack other insects but are not known to destroy entire populations of those insects.

If AGH is accidentally introduced into Wisconsin, this hornet will have negative impacts on the honey bee industry, environment, economy, and public health.

What does it look like?

AGH is the world's largest hornet. There are several subspecies of this hornet. They all have a wingspan of about 3-inches and a body length of about 2-inches. They have a large, yellow-orange head and a black and yellow striped abdomen (see image on page 2). This hornet can fly up to 25 mph and up to 60 miles a day. Once established, they tend to fly about one mile from their nest, which is usually in the ground.

The only insect in Wisconsin that may likely be mistaken for AGH is the cicada killer wasp - a solitary wasp that can grow almost as large as the AGH. As the name implies, this native wasp feeds on cicadas and is relatively harmless to humans. There are many other smaller species of native hornets and wasps (see page 2) that serve beneficial purposes as predators of garden pests and other unwanted insects. As long as they are not infringing on human activities, it is best to leave these insects alone.

How can I protect myself?

Use extreme caution near AGH. The stinger of an AGH is longer than that of a honey bee and the venom is more toxic than any local bee or wasp. Typical beekeeping protective clothing is not sufficient to protect you from stings. If you find a colony, do not attempt to remove or eradicate it, but report it to the Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection (DATCP) immediately. Anyone who is allergic to bee or wasp stings should never approach an AGH.

What should I do if I think I see one?

If you see an insect that looks like AGH, do the following:

- Do **not** approach the insect. Many insects look very similar to each other (see page 2), but caution is still necessary. Watch from a safe distance.
- Take a picture if you are able to do so safely. Email pictures to datcppesthotline@wi.gov.
- If you find a dead insect which you believe may be AGH, place the dead insect in a small container with alcohol and contact DATCP for more details.

You can help find and report any invasive pest by doing any of the following:

- Call the toll-free pest hotline at (866) 440-7523
- Email datcppesthotline@wi.gov

Provide information detailing your sighting as well as your contact information.

Comparing AGH to Others

Images courtesy of Washington State Department of Agriculture

4 cm



Vespa mandarinia
Asian giant hornet



Sphecius speciosus
Eastern cicada killer wasp

Photo credit: Whitney Cranshaw,
Colorado State University, Bugwood.org



Dolichovespula maculata
Bald-faced hornet



Vespa crabro
European hornet



Apis mellifera
European honey bee

