



ACT
Government

Territory and Municipal Services

MEDIA Release

MR63/0212

10 February 2012

EUROPEAN WASPS INVADE CANBERRA HOMES

Canberrans are reminded to keep an eye out for signs of European wasp nests in and around the home, Dr Phillip Spradbery, wasp expert with Territory and Municipal Services, said today.

“Many Canberra families are returning home after the summer holidays to find swarms of European wasps nesting in their homes or gardens,” Dr Spradbery said. “Already this year, several houses in Canberra have had European wasps entering the home as a result of them establishing their nest in the wall cavity and roof spaces.

“Around 70 percent of all nests reported in Canberra are built in the wall cavity or roof space of houses. Each year over 500 nests are reported to the ACT Government’s European Wasp Hotline.

“In spring, European wasp queens awaken from their winter hibernation and search for suitable places to build their nests in Canberra suburbs. No bigger than a golf ball to begin with, these queen-built nests quickly grow after the arrival of the first new adult worker wasps.

“At this time of the year, European wasp nests are approaching the size of a soccer ball with a population of around 1,000 adult wasps.

“To accommodate the growing nest, the wasps excavate the surrounding soil or plaster board and often break through into the living space of the house. Numerous stinging episodes have occurred from this behaviour. If not detected by late autumn the European wasp nest can become as large as a basketball, hosting up to 4,000 adult wasps.”

Dr Spradbery said the recommended first aid for a wasp sting is an ice pack to reduce the pain and swelling. However, if people are stung in the mouth, experience difficulty in breathing or develop an itchy rash indicating a severe allergic response, seek medical help immediately.

“Residents are advised to be on the lookout for European wasps nesting within and around their homes. As nests are generally hidden away, a constant stream of wasps flying in and out of a hole in the ground or the walls of a house is a sign that a nest is present.

“If residents locate a nest on their property they must engage a qualified pest control operator to treat it. Do not attempt to treat the nest yourself as you risk being stung.

“For advice on identifying European wasps and their control, please contact the ACT Government’s European Wasp Hotline on 6162 1914.”

To arrange a photograph with Dr Phillip Spradbery please call Kelly Ashcroft on 6207 6882.

Statement ends

Media contact: Kelly Ashcroft, 6207 6882