

Yellow Jackets



Yellow jacket drinking soda.



Small yellow jacket nest.



Typical bald-faced hornet nest.

Yellow jacket wasps build large, hidden nests. The nests are usually subterranean in rodent burrows or in cavities in trees, walls or attics.

Yellow jacket nests can be huge with 50,000 to 100,000 workers. In temperate climates these colonies are annual. They are founded in the spring by new queens and die in the fall. New queens are produced by the colonies in the fall and spend the winter in protected places until spring. Yellow jacket colonies can become perennial in warmer climates, such as in Hawaii. In these situations the nests can become enormous with millions of workers!

Yellow jacket nests can be distinguished from paper wasp nests because the brood cells are encased in a paper envelope so they can't be seen without taking off the envelope.

These wasps feed both on live prey and some, such as *pensylvanica*, will scavenge other source of meat and sugar, including sodas and hamburgers. They will also visit aphids and scale insects on trees and shrubs for honeydew.

The western yellow jacket, *Vespula pensylvanica*, and the German yellow jacket, *Vespula germanica* are major pests in California and worldwide where they've been introduced. They can be separated by the complete yellow eye ring in *pensylvanica*.



Western yellow jacket.



German yellow jacket.