

Asian hornets identified in Essex



PUBLISHED SEP 28, 2022
BY [GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk)

Beekeepers and members of the public are today (Wednesday 28 September) being asked to remain vigilant after Asian hornets were spotted in the Rayleigh area of Essex.

The National Bee Unit has confirmed the sighting and monitoring is underway to detect further Asian hornets in the vicinity.

The Asian hornet is smaller than our native hornet and poses no greater risk to human health than our native wasps and hornets. However, they do pose a risk to honey bees and work is already underway to monitor for any hornet activity and to identify any nests nearby.

This is the first confirmed UK sighting since April 2022, when a single Asian hornet was captured in Felixstowe, Suffolk.

Defra's Chief Plant and Bee Health Officer Nicola Spence said:

By ensuring we are alerted to possible sightings as early as possible, we can take swift and effective action to stamp out the threat posed by Asian hornets. That's why we are working at speed to locate and investigate any nests in the area following this confirmed sighting.

While the Asian hornet poses no greater risk to human health than other wasps or hornets, we recognise the damage they can cause to honey bee colonies and other beneficial insects.

Please continue to look out for any Asian hornets and if you think you've spotted one, report your sighting through the Asian hornet app or online.

It is important to take care not to approach or disturb a nest. Asian hornets are not generally aggressive towards people but

an exception to this is when they perceive a threat to their nest.

If you suspect you have seen an Asian hornet you should report this using the iPhone and Android app 'Asian Hornet Watch' or by using our online report form. Alternatively, include a photograph if you can safely obtain one.

Identification guides and more information are available and if you keep bees you should keep up to date with the latest situation on the gov.uk sightings page and on BeeBase.

Further information:

The cost of eradication on private land will be met by APHA.

The Great Britain Non-native Species Secretariat is a joint venture between Defra, the Scottish Government and the Welsh Government to tackle the threat of invasive species. More information can be found on their website.

For details on the appearance of an Asian hornet, please refer to the BeeBase guide or the non-native species identification guide.

Photographs of the Asian hornet are available on our Flickr account.

The Asian hornet (*Vespa velutina*) is not to be confused with the Asian giant hornet (*Vespa mandarinia*) which has been found in North America.

Press release distributed by Media Pigeon on behalf of GOV.UK, on Sep 28, 2022. For more information subscribe and [follow us](#).

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