



Fleas Can Cause Unease

Fleas can be a nuisance and problem any time of year. Especially as cooler weather sets in, these pests can be brought into your home on cats, dogs or rodents that are trying to find a warm place to spend the winter months. Fleas are small, typically one sixteenth of an inch, reddish-brown, wingless, blood-sucking insects. Their bodies are laterally compressed, (i.e., flattened side-to-side) permitting ease of movement through the hairs on their host's body. Their legs are long and well adapted for jumping and the mouthparts of an adult flea are adapted for sucking blood from a

host. The female adult needs a blood meal prior to laying her eggs.

Much of the flea problem associated with pets has been eliminated by properly applying products offered by veterinarians to pet owners. However, fleas are still out there and doing well in wildlife and rodent populations. Other pests like bed bugs, lice and mosquitoes may cause bites within a home, and therefore it is good to have a proper inspection and identification of the infestation. We recommend you give us a call so that we can provide suggestions and treatments to eliminate your flea and blood sucking pest problems. ■

European Hornet

Imagine a quiet fall evening. The temperature has not quite dropped too low and you and your family are spending the evening in the front yard. Suddenly a wasp of some sort comes flying toward your porch lights. It's relatively large and has a rather ominous looking stinger. What type of pest is this?

Your porch lights have attracted the European hornet. This social wasp is one of the largest hornets, whose queen can measure up to 1.4 inches long. The European hornet is larger than a yellowjacket, and can be identified by an abdomen (rear part) that is black or brown with yellow markings. Females possess a stinger, however this species is not particularly aggressive unless defending their nest, and care must be taken when in its

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Smells Like Citronella

Have you recently noticed bright or brownish yellow ants about ¼ inch long coming up through floor joints and doors in your home or garage? You are most likely dealing with Citronella ants. Yes, we said *Citronella*! Use your finger to crush one of these ants, and sniff your fingers afterwards ... what do you smell? That's right! It is the citronella or lemon verbena scent, just like that which is often impregnated into candles to keep mosquitoes away. They emit this odor as a natural defense mechanism when threatened.

These large yellow ants are most often noted in spring or fall right after a heavy rain or other disturbance, like construction, landscaping or gardening near their nest sites. Other than being a nuisance, Citronella ants are not really structurally infesting. Normally, they forage below the surface of the soil and are not seen on the surface at all. They are subterranean insects that feed on honeydew excretions of aphids and mealy bugs feeding on the roots of

shrubs. But, when seen, most of us share the same sentiment that, "the only good ant is a dead ant, especially if it is sharing my living space!"

The citronella ant tends to nest in rotting wood, under slabs, patios, and rocks, in crawl spaces, and between insulation, and sub flooring. Worker ants in large colonies may create significant mounds of soil. In rare instances, numerous small mounds or visible openings may appear scattered across a lawn. They are found throughout much of the continental United States, and are frequently confused with termites when they swarm into the living areas of homes. Although intrusions may alarm homeowners, the ants will not reproduce within the home nor will they attack stored goods or structures. In some cases, swarms may occur repeatedly and attempts should be made to locate the colony or colonies, which typically have mounds of soil around the openings where excavated soil is deposited. ■



While impressive due to their large size (up to 1.4 inches long) and loud sound, European hornets are much less aggressive than some of their smaller relatives.

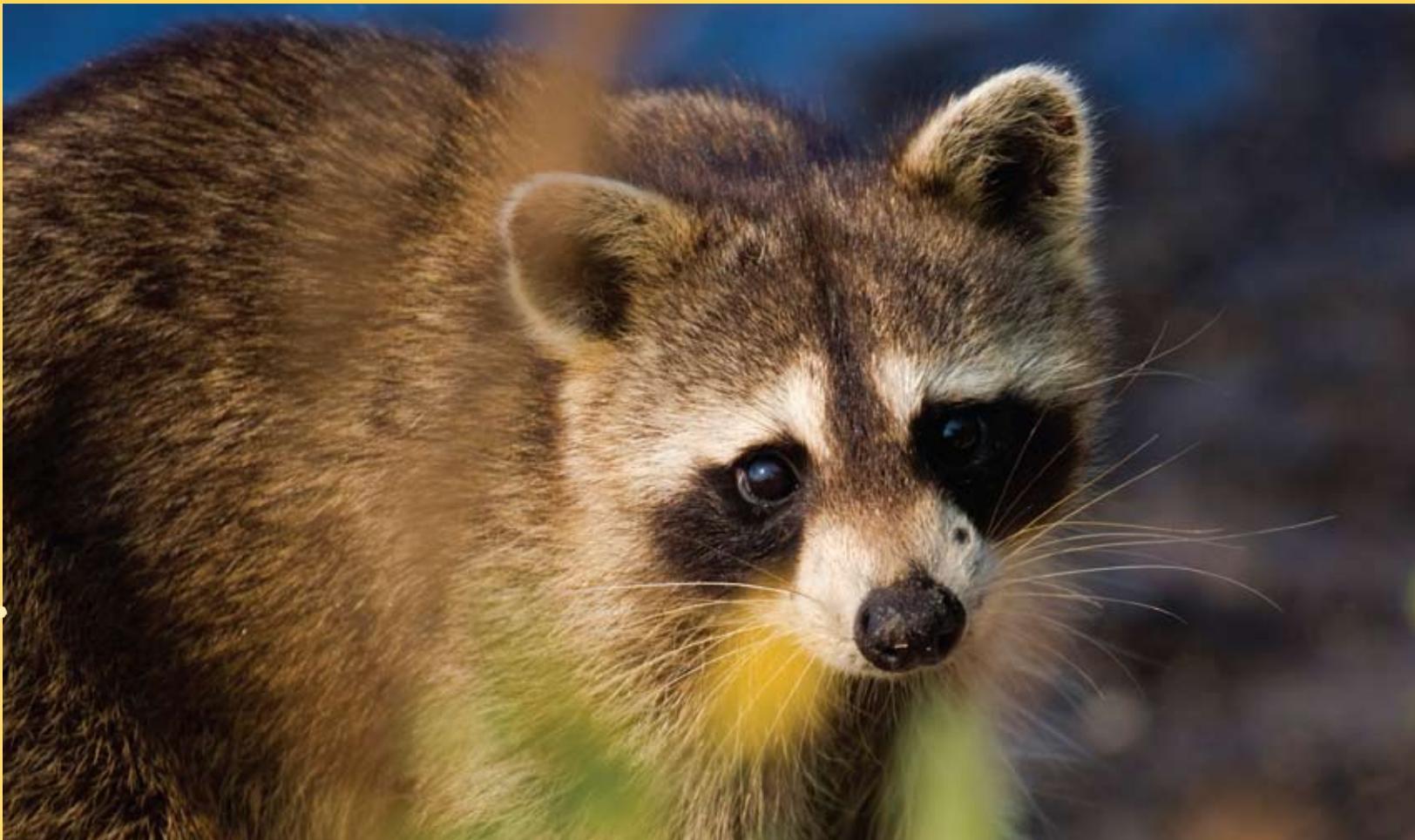
European Hornets (continued)

proximity, as stings can be quite painful. As with most stinging insects, European hornets will sting in self-defense, such as when stepped on. While impressive due to their size and loud sound, European hornets are in fact much less aggressive than some of their smaller relatives, like yellowjackets.

European hornets are typically a woodland species, building nests in hollow trees. Unfortunately they sometimes mistakenly nest in your attic, hollow walls, crawl spaces, barn, or birdhouses. Nests are covered with a thick, brown envelope (paper-like) material composed of coarse, decayed wood fibers that are quite fragile. During the summer, these hornets can fly at night and are often attracted to lights. They sometimes fly into the beam of a flashlight (bumping into the glass cover) or appear near lights or lantern lights at campsites. Occasionally, some fly against windows, causing people to

believe they are trying to get inside to attack them, and inspiring several wonderful horror film-type stories.

These hornets can cause problems in your yard by girdling twigs and branches of numerous trees and shrubs including lilac, birch and dogwood. These plants are sometimes killed by their actions. Other complaints involve nesting too close to human-occupied structures, presence in picnic and campgrounds, eating ripe or near-ripened fruits, and raiding domestic honeybee hives. The best control measure is to have the nest destroyed during dusk when the majority of hornets are inside the nests. Although these hornets can be beneficial by feeding on live insects such as grasshoppers, flies, and yellow jackets, the European hornet can sting repeatedly in defense of the nest entrance. If a nest is built too close to your home we highly recommend you call us, your pest management professionals, to remove your European hornet problem. ■



The Masked Bandit

Raccoons prefer wooded areas near water and in natural habitats, but this nocturnal animal adapts extremely well to urban and suburban environments where it often dens in backyards and beneath decks. Your attic, chimney and the crawlspaces beneath your house may also serve as their home when access can be gained. Since raccoons are most active at night, they may be undetected for some time. Often a rattling garbage can or dog's bark is the first real sign of danger.

Raccoons are some of the most widespread, omnivorous mammals in the U.S. They consume a varied diet that includes berries, insects, fruit, chickens, and small mammals. Raccoons sometimes wash, or douse, their food in water before eating it. They will eat almost anything and they readily come to garbage cans and pet food containers left on porches and patios.

Since these animals are adept at opening things with their hands, they can also enter many spaces other animals cannot. Pregnant females will often enter a garage, attic or chimney space to nest and have their young. If later prevented from accessing her young, the mother raccoon will then destroy anything in her path in an attempt to be reunited with them. This can create quite a mess for a homeowner in terms of physical destruction to the structure, but also, the resulting dead and decaying young carcasses will create offensive odors and draw flies and other unwanted pests. Between public health concerns, unwanted destruction and strict guidelines for removal of wildlife, it is best to leave trapping and relocation of raccoons to your pest management professional.

Call us today and we will assist you in eliminating your raccoon problem. Also, keep in mind that if a raccoon appears to be aggressive and showing abnormal behavior, such as appearing sick or disoriented, then there is a good possibility that the raccoon is rabid. In this case, the proper authorities should also be notified. ■



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The **Evil** Weevil

Sometimes found in the home, it is good to be aware of rice weevils that infest dried beans, acorns, chestnuts, birdseed, sunflower seeds, and macaroni that may be stored in your cupboard. Rice Weevils penetrate and feed on the internal portions of whole grains during the larval stage, making early detection of an infestation very difficult to ascertain. They are usually found in larger grain storage facilities or processing plants, infesting wheat, oats, rye, barley, rice, and corn.

The adult rice weevil is small, 1/10 inch long and stout in appearance. It is reddish-brown to black in color with four light yellow or reddish spots on the corners of the top wings. Like all weevils, there is an elongated snout at the beetle's front end and the area behind the head (*called a prothorax*) is strongly pitted. The larva is fat with a cream colored body that stays inside hollowed grain kernel. This wholegrain pest, which originated in India, was spread worldwide by commerce and is one of the most serious stored grain pests on the globe. The adult rice weevil can fly and is attracted to lights. When disturbed, adults pull in their legs, fall to the ground, and feign death. If you see any weevils in your pantry, give us a call and we will eliminate them for you. As always be sure to check any grains you purchase from your local grocery store before they end up in your pantry. ■



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LIFE CYCLE

