

BALDFACED HORNET

Hymenoptera, Vespidae: *Dolichovespula maculata* (L.)

By Eric R. Day



Baldfaced hornet, front view [Photo by Joseph Berger, bugwood.org]

DESCRIPTION: The baldfaced hornet is a large, black and white hornet up to 1 inch (25.4mm) in length. It is black and white in color with a mostly white head or “face”. It is widely distributed in Virginia. The nests are constructed of the same paper-like material as that of other wasps (yellowjackets). They differ a great deal from other wasp nests in being enclosed in a thick “paper” envelope. There is a single opening at the lower end of the nest and a few hornets always guard this. Nests are always abandoned at the end of the season.

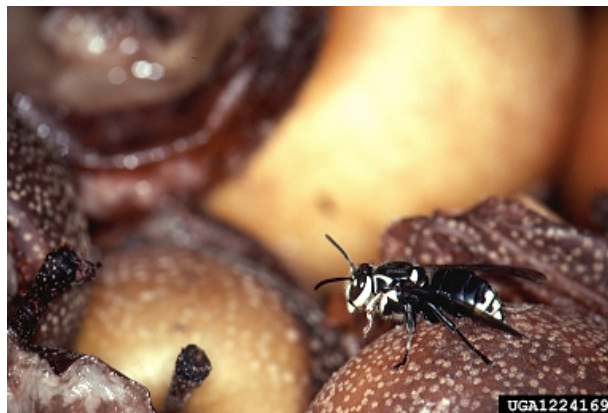
HABITAT: The oval-shaped nests are often quite large and are usually found attached to limbs of trees.

LIFE CYCLE: The workers are killed by frosts in the fall. The fertilized females (future queens) hibernate in barns,

attics, and other sheltered places. The queen by herself starts the new nest in a new location in the spring.

TYPE OF DAMAGE: Hornets are beneficial; they prey upon flies and caterpillars. Unfortunately they can be a potential health hazard to people allergic to their stings.

CONTROL: Hornet nests in trees, lawns, or buildings away from the normal activity of people should not be considered dangerous-and should not be removed. If a nest must be removed, wear protective clothing, work at night (when the temperature is low and it is fully dark); use a red light to see (hornets cannot see red light very well); use a “wasp and hornet” type spray; and, do not use gasoline.



Baldfaced Hornet on fruit

[J A Payne, USDA Ag. Research Service, Bugwood.org]



Baldfaced Hornet nest in tree
[J A Payne, USDA Ag. Research Service, Bugwood.org]