

# The differences between Honey Bees and European Wasps

As you sit back in the garden, watching bees buzzing around pollinating flowers, try to relax: these flying insects have little interest in stinging you - unless you threaten them or are too close to the hive or nest.



When observing bees, the first thing to do is look around to make sure you are not too close to a nest or hive (this includes ants nests and other flying insects hives – all insects are protective of their homes). If a flying insect does come close to you, then simply be still or move carefully away – don't yell, scream, run or flap your arms about.

Another good tip is to identify the differences between wasps and bees. Most Australian wasp species don't look like bees as they have a small toothpick waist and fly with their legs hanging down. However, the European Wasp and Honey Bee can look quite similar.

The colour of the European Wasp's abdomen or "tail" is always clearly striped in strong yellow and black. They have yellow legs and their abdomen is a little longer than Honey Bees. They will also fly in a zig-zag way when looking closely at food and then move in a more direct way when travelling from place to place. European Wasps have bigger antennae and can wiggle them in a jerky way and also flick their wings.

European Wasps are scavengers and will hang around your food, your pet's food, rotting fruit or an open compost bin. This means you are more likely to have a problem with wasps hanging around. Unlike bees, they can sting more than once.

The Honey Bees coloured abdomen stripes vary from a soft black through to a golden yellow. Their stripes are not as clearly defined as the European Wasp. This is because Honey Bees have more hair on their abdomen. Honey Bee's have black legs with pollen baskets that sometimes are full of pollen. Wasps don't have pollen baskets.

Bees will sometimes check you out to see if you are a flower with nectar or pollen! Don't be alarmed because they will move on quickly (unless you are eating a honey sandwich!).

If you live in Tasmania, Victoria, ACT, parts of NSW and around Adelaide you may expect to see European Wasps. They have also been found in pockets near Perth and north of Brisbane. If you live anywhere in Australia you can expect to see Honey Bees in your garden. They are amazing insects and responsible for pollinating at least ONE mouthful in every THREE that we eat!

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Honey bee



European wasp

