

News story: Asian hornet outbreak contained in Devon

A recent outbreak of Asian hornets has been successfully contained by bee inspectors who promptly tracked down and destroyed their nest in Devon.

The hornets were first discovered in the Woolacombe area in September, but the National Bee Unit moved swiftly to find the nest and remove it.

No further live Asian hornets have been seen since the nest was treated with pesticide and removed earlier this month.

Nicola Spence, Defra Deputy Director for Plant and Bee Health, said:

I am pleased our well-established protocol to contain Asian hornets has worked so effectively in Devon.

We remain vigilant, however, and will continue to monitor the situation and encourage people to look out for any Asian hornet nests.

Members of the public are a vital tool in spotting Asian hornets and we urge people to report any potential sightings through the Asian hornet app or online.

This included a two mile surveillance zone in Devon, with bee inspectors scouring the area to track the hornets and the nest. The Animal and Plant Health Agency also opened a local control centre to coordinate the response between the various agencies and teams involved.

Asian hornets pose no greater risk to human health than a bee, though they are a threat to honey bee colonies.

The hornet prey on honeybees, disrupting the ecological role which they provide and damaging commercial beekeeping activities. This is why Defra takes quick action to identify and destroy their nests.

The species arrived in France in 2004 and is now common across large areas of Europe. It was discovered for the first time in the British Isles in Jersey, Alderney and Gloucestershire last summer.

Asian hornets can be confused with their larger native European hornet counterparts; the Asian hornet abdomen is almost entirely dark while the European hornet's abdomen is largely yellow.

It is possible Asian hornets could reappear in the UK and members of the public alongside the nation's beekeepers are urged to report any suspected sightings.

- The 'Asian hornet watch' app is available to download from the Apple and Android app stores.
- Members of the public can also report sightings by email to alertnonnative@ceh.ac.uk with a photo or on the Non-native Species Secretariat website.
- Details on the appearance of an Asian hornet can be found on the Bee Base guide or the non-native species identification guide.