

Advice Note

Bees

These notes are to assist people who at sometime are bothered by bees (*Apoidea*). For obvious reasons bees are not regarded as pests because of all the good work that they do in the ecosystem, pollinating plants. No bees, no plants, no food! But nevertheless, they can be a cause for concern.

It is important to know the difference between bees and wasps (*Vespoidea*) and the main variants are that bees appear in the summer a lot earlier than wasps which appear in numbers in July, August and September. Bees are usually duller in appearance and are generally hairy whereas wasps have no hairs on their body and are brighter black and yellow.

There are about 250 different species of bees. A few are social insects but the majority are solitary. The more common species found around homes are described below.

Bumble Bee (*Bombus*)

A social insect that is normally found in colonies, usually in a neglected part of the garden where garden refuse has collected. When clearing these sites it is quite common to unearth a nest, if so, then wait until almost dark, dig up the nest and place it in another out of the way corner or hedge, where the bees will either stay and continue their work or leave to find a more suitable site. Bumble bees can be found in sheds where the same method of removal can be used and in nesting boxes, where they can be as amusing to watch as the birds.

Mining Bees

This family of bees, about 100 different species, live in the ground are solitary although with rudimentary social behaviour. They are most noticed when they have thrown up little conical piles of soil, (*Adrena armata*). These bees are excellent pollinators of fruit trees and their sting is so weak it cannot penetrate a man's hand.

Flower Bee, Masonry Bee, Potter Bee

These are all solitary bees that may turn up around your property at sometime. They will make use of any convenient sized hole such as airbricks, keyholes and holes in masonry. They make a small clay pot where they will deposit an egg amongst the honey and pollen within. Apart from the fact that it may block a lock with mud these bees are completely harmless.

Honey Bee (*Apis mellifera*)

This is the only species of its genus and it is almost entirely domesticated. Usually around the month of May, the hives become overcrowded and a new queen emerges. The original queen will fly out of the hive taking with her almost half of the community sometimes up to 30,000 bees. These swarms may appear in bushes and trees, airbricks or chimneys and a beekeeper should be notified so that they can be removed and taken to a new hive. There are occasions when some of these bees will find themselves in your home. If this is the case then try to find the place where they have gained access. This is usually an airbrick, chimney or a hole where a pipe passes through the wall or just simply through an open window. Once you have sealed the access point it is a simple job of spraying the remaining trapped bees with a fly spray* and clearing away bodies with a vacuum cleaner. If you require assistance in obtaining a beekeeper to remove a swarm of honey bees you can contact this office on the above number. Similarly, the Police Station and/or Library will have a list of beekeepers in your area.

*Always use pesticides safely. Please read and follow carefully the instructions on the packaging.