



## The life of a Parasitoid wasp



### Spider wasp (Family Pompilidae) dragging spider

No native wasp species in southern Western Australia are social, thus, they lack a queen, her drone consorts and a nest of workers doing her bidding. Instead, our native wasps have interesting lives as solitary hunters or parasitoides – they feed on and actually kill their hosts. They are also kleptoparasites, stealing their host's food supply before they kill them.

These wasps often focus on one type of host such as caterpillars, beetles, bugs, cockroach or grasshopper ootheca (egg cases), spiders or spider egg cases or even other wasps! The female wasp locates suitable food plants or habitats and then uses her antenna to taste and search systematically for a suitable host. Once a suitable host is found, she will use her ovipositor to either insert eggs into the

host body or attach them externally. When the larvae hatch, they consume the living host, and pupation takes place within what is left of the dead host, inside the host's pupal chamber or they form their own pupa. The length of the ovipositor (the modified egg injecting stinger on the back end) can indicate the type of host they look for. For example, some wasps have ovipositors 8 times their body length as their hosts are wood-boring insects.

Potter, Digger or Spider wasps will build or dig a chamber for a single egg, and then hunt down larger prey like spiders and grasshoppers. To keep the larva's food supply fresh each victim is paralysed and delivered live to the nest where an egg is laid on the host.

Cuckoo wasps lay their eggs inside the nest of other wasps. The cuckoo larvae then consume both the host wasp and its food supply.

Other wasps are tiny, or have weirdly shaped abdomens, and attack spider or insect eggs or even aphids and other sap-sucking insects.

Many parasitic wasps control pest insects in the garden. So if you see a weird, or wonderful wasp, try and photograph it, make a MyPestGuide™ report and we will see if it's a parasitoid checking out the food options for her babies.

## Report suspect pests



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[mypestguide.agric.wa.gov.au](http://mypestguide.agric.wa.gov.au)



Pest and Disease Information Service  
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