



Department of
Agriculture and Food



Backyard Buddies

Your monthly guide to animal and plant pests, diseases and weeds

January 2015

Trapping exotic invaders



European wasps are attracted to proteins including fish.



Mediterranean fruit fly (Medfly)

Two insects long ago spread beyond their home ranges and colonised new continents.
One is established in WA, the other is not.

Populations of the first can be reduced using combined techniques and team work, while preventing the second pest from establishing relies on individual people being observant.

Each insect is associated with the use of a trap, but with entirely different purposes.

Minimising medfly

The breeding cycle of Mediterranean fruit fly (*Ceratitis capitata*) or 'medfly' is much shorter in summer, so numbers escalate quickly. It is crucial to keep up control for the next few months, including autumn when the medflies present will overwinter and generate next spring's brood.

'Lure and kill' traps, which attract and then kill medfly, are fairly effective if you are in an isolated area away from other householders with fruit trees. Commercial lure and kill devices are available from garden centres.

For advice on making your own traps please read our [Mediterranean fruit fly](#) webpage. Instructions include home-made lure recipes, but please note that home-made lures attract other insect species as well.

However, if you are in an established suburb with many fruit trees being grown for home use, you are better off covering fruits with mesh bags or sleeves. These can be bought online or make them yourself from muslin or fly mesh. Make sure that they don't touch the fruit as medfly can lay eggs through the cloth or mesh.

Anyone finding an unfamiliar fruit fly should contact the Pest and Disease Information Service (PaDIS) on Freecall 1800 084 881 or email info@agric.wa.gov.au because it could well be a species new to WA.

Community action

Medfly reduction is much more successful if neighbours, whether in suburbia or rural areas, join forces in the fight. An untreated property that harbours medfly virtually cancels out the efforts of the diligent landowner next door.

Untreated backyard trees can lead to nearby commercial orchards being infested. Home gardeners should remove a tree if they don't pick and use the fruit. Fallen fruit or "hangers-on" in the branches must be harvested and binned.

Detecting the worst wasp

European wasps (*Vespula germanica*) are the last guests we want at a barbecue. Vicious stingers, they are drawn to sweet foods, meat and sausages, and will crawl inside cans of cool drinks and beer.

Within the wasp's range WA is the only place in the world which has prevented them establishing. The Department of Agriculture and Food, Western Australia (DAFWA) officers have destroyed 849 nests in the 37 years since the first was discovered.

These wasps are established in eastern Australia, from where fertilised queens reach WA via freight and cargo every year. They then fly off and start new nests.

When commercial road transport is the source the majority of nests are found near industrial zones such as Welshpool, Kewdale, Bibra Lake, Canning Vale, Malaga and Wangara. Nests in coastal suburbs are due to fertilised queens reaching Fremantle by ship.

However, they could occur anywhere across the metro area and have also been discovered in towns from Kalbarri to Eucla.

Reports of wasp sightings by members of the public are an important way DAFWA can locate nests. Anyone seeing one of these wasps should contact PaDIS.

Adopting a trap

DAFWA uses surveillance traps to complement public reporting. Since 2011 it has made traps available to the public.

Contact PaDIS to order a trap, which comes with instructions on where to hang it and how to proceed if you do catch a European wasp. The monitoring period began in December but runs until the end of May so there is still ample time to participate.

Baiting involves placing an ice cube-sized chunk of non-oily fish such as pink ling in the trap. The bait loses its smell within hours. The cost is negligible: a single fillet provides enough for the season; chop up and freeze, replacing every week or, at least, fortnightly. The trap is specifically designed for a European wasp and rarely catches paper wasps or bees.