



Appendix P

Asian Hornets – What Can we Do Locally? **Proposal written by Susan Abbott, local coordinator**

Background

On Friday 3rd November 2023, at the National Honey Show. Richard Noel, a British commercial beekeeper in Brittany, gave a talk about Asian Hornets.

It was a sobering talk and it would have been easy to be very worried about the increasing expansion of Asian Hornets in the UK. BUT there were some good and positive take home messages, if we act in a timely and in a co-ordinated manner, especially at a local level.

Richard Noel described the decimation the hornets create within the local ecology. They have a significant impact on the honey bee population as well as wider biodiversity.

Asian hornets consume a variety of insects and spiders. The major concern about Asian hornets for UK beekeepers is that when they find a honey bee colony, they tend to settle down in that area and specialise in honey bees as their prey. Honeybees have little defence against this new invader; unlike their cousins in Asia, our bees are not adapted to repel them. At the same time the hornets also consume many lesser-known solitary and colonial bee species as well as local wasps, caterpillars, moths etc. Asian hornets seem to eat everything that is available to them and in doing so have a marked impact on local wildlife. They do not seem to have any significant predators of their own; they are apex predators. This hornet can be confused with our European Hornet (*V. crabro*). The Asian Hornet can easily be identified because it is smaller than the European Hornet, has an orange head and yellow legs. It starts to fly earlier in the season than the European Hornet, meaning that it is possible to selectively trap this notifiable pest without harming native insects.

The Current Situation

So far, there have been more confirmed UK sightings of the Asian hornet in 2023 than there were in all the previous years combined and, at the time of writing 71 nests have been destroyed. The UK sightings so far in 2023 are clustered around the coast in Kent, Dorset, Hampshire, Plymouth and Weymouth. In France the rate of spread is approximately 100km/year. We have a small head start in our area but need to act now.

What Are We Doing Nationally?

The Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) is trying to prevent a nationwide Asian hornet invasion, currently through eradication of individuals and nests. But if the species becomes established in the UK, it is likely there is very little that could be done about it.

It's vital that Asian hornets in the UK are reported and that their nests are destroyed to decelerate their spread and reduce their impact on our ecology. This may well quickly become an exhausted strategy, as it now has in France, because the hornets have spread so quickly. Nevertheless, with support from local groups and organisations we can, locally, contribute to this strategy as a short term measure.

Once the Asian hornets are established within an area, eradication is almost impossible and we then have to resort to management and mitigation strategies if we wish to minimise their impact on flora and fauna.

A Strategy for Goring Parish and surrounding Area

I am a member of Reading Beekeepers and also the Asian Hornet team lead of the Association. I live in Whitchurch Hill and belong to Goring Greenfingers gardening group. A group of Reading members are currently liaising with their own parish councils and other local groups in order to develop a combined local strategy that will enable us to reduce the inevitable impact of these hornets. Kidmore End have agreed to help. Pangbourne and Whitchurch Sustainability have the Asian Hornet as their 'Biodiversity Theme for 2023'. It would be wonderful to add Goring Parish too. I am also writing to Woodcote, Streatley and Goring Heath as well.

This would probably involve a two-pronged approach of 1. Awareness/Education and 2. Trapping Asian Hornet queens.

1. Education/Awareness:

- Have articles printed in local magazines.
- Display information/posters on notice boards throughout the villages.
- Give talks to gardening groups, allotment associations, conservations group and anyone else you can think of.
- Involve the local schools too and church groups.



Etbc Costs for flyers/posters/leaflets to be given out at group talks and laminated posters for notice boards.

2. Trapping Asian Hornet queens

- Reports from France suggest that in areas where spring trapping has been used, subsequent numbers of Asian hornet nests are reduced by as much as 97% (2 or 3 nests in trapping areas versus >70 nests where no traps have been set up). Source: DEFRA, National Bee Unit.
- Asian hornets wake up early in the year and start flying when the temperature is above 12 degrees. The same time as honey bees but earlier than a European hornet.

I'd like to propose the purchase of number of traps to be distributed around the parish that are monitored regularly. The best trap to use costs £24.00 each, bulk discounts are offered, see sample costs below. This trap allows any other insects to escape but not so for queen hornets a minimum of 10 -20 units would be helpful, perhaps adding another 10—15 subsequent years. Community groups may well offer to purchase a trap, monitor and report findings?

I would be happy to do a very short presentation to illustrate the impact these hornets are having in Europe and the UK and to explain how we could best implement a short and medium term plan. A small amount of funding will be required to implement this as well as commitment from the community.

	Gard'Apis - Complete Hornet Trap Kit	20	£19.19	£383.80
Gard'Apis				
✓ In stock				
	Asian Hornet Attractant, 1 litre bottle, Vespa Catch	2	£43.40	£86.80
Asian Hornet Attractant, bottle 1 litre				
✓ In stock				