

PEST EXCLUSION ADVISORY No. 18-2023

To: All County Agricultural Commissioners

Date: October 24, 2023

Place: Sacramento

Phone: (916) 654-0312

From: Plant Health and Pest Prevention Services

Subject: **Pest of Concern: Yellow-Legged Hornet (*Vespa velutina*)**

The California Department of Food and Agriculture is issuing this advisory to notify counties of an invasive pest that was recently discovered in the southeastern US and has the potential to reach California.

The yellow-legged hornet (*Vespa velutina*) was first detected earlier this year when a beekeeper near Savannah, GA, found an unusual hornet on his property and reported it to the Georgia Department of Agriculture (GDA). Following positive identification of the hornet as *Vespa velutina* by APHIS in August 2023, a team of GDA scientists safely eradicated the nest, and then a second nest the following month. It is unknown if the hornet is established in Georgia, and GDA and APHIS continue to monitor for any other potential nests.

If yellow-legged hornets are allowed to establish in the U.S., there is a risk of it spreading to California, which could be rapidly accomplished through movement via interstate transport. This hornet poses a risk to agriculture and the environment by threatening honeybees as well as native bees, which are critical for the pollination of the state's crops and natural flora.

Besides economic impacts, this hornet is also presumed to have environmental impacts, as it preys on a wide variety of insects (including pollinators), and it can compete with native wasps.

Be on the lookout for yellow-legged hornets when performing inspections on material originating from Georgia.



Yellow-legged Hornet
Vespa velutina

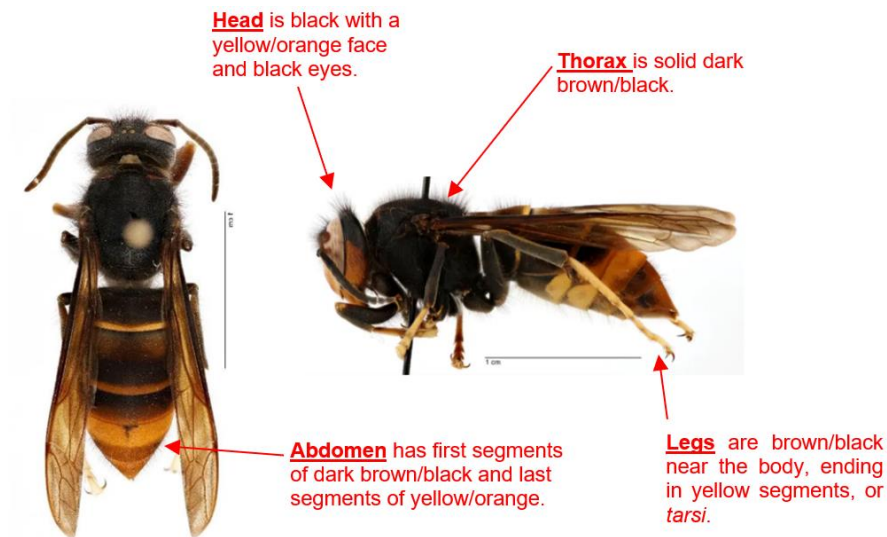
Nest of the Yellow-legged Hornet (YLH)
Vespa velutina

Distinguishing Features of *Vespa velutina*

Native to Southeast Asia, *Vespa velutina* is a social wasp species that constructs paper nests above ground in trees, human made structures, or cliffs. These nests can become large and possess up to 6,000 workers as they mature. This hornet preys upon a variety of insects, including honeybees, wasps, flies, spiders, and grasshoppers.

Vespa velutina can be mistaken for many native and domestic species that are more likely to be found in the United States. Many of these lookalikes do not pose an environmental or agricultural threat and may be beneficial.

See the figure below for a list of some of *Vespa velutina*'s distinguishing features. To see more photo comparisons of *Vespa velutina* alongside several lookalike species, you can visit [USDA-APHIS \(Yellow-Legged Hornet\)](https://www.aphis.usda.gov/aphis/area_default.asp?menu=topic&topic=yellow-legged-hornet).



The Face of a yellow-legged hornet. Note the yellow face and yellow tarsi (Photo retrieved from <https://extension.psu.edu/yellow-legged-hornet>)



Sources: [USDA-APHIS \(Yellow-Legged Hornet\)](https://www.aphis.usda.gov/aphis/area_default.asp?menu=topic&topic=yellow-legged-hornet)
<https://extension.psu.edu/yellow-legged-hornet>
[Yellow-Legged Hornet | Georgia Department of Agriculture](https://www.gadepartment.com/yellow-legged-hornet)

For questions regarding this advisory, please contact peinfo@cdfa.ca.gov.