

# Healthy Colorado Schools

## JUNE TIP OF THE MONTH – STINGING INSECTS



Paper wasps, yellowjackets and hornets can be a serious nuisance problem during the warm months. Schools often find yellowjackets scavenging around dumpsters and trash containers. The western yellowjacket (in the photo) is the most important stinging insect in Colorado. This insect is estimated to cause at least 90 percent of the “bee stings” in the state. The European paper wasp is relatively non-aggressive and

less likely to sting. Stings from paper wasps and hornets usually occur when nests are disturbed.

One way to tell the difference between these three insects is to look at the nests. The nests of European paper wasps usually are attached to wood on the underside of porch decks, eaves or other overhangs. Yellowjackets nest underground using existing hollows, including in children’s playground equipment. Nests of yellowjackets are enclosed in a paper envelope, but they are rarely seen unless excavated. Colonies are readily defended. Hornets produce large, conspicuous grayish paper nests in trees, shrubs and under building eaves; these nests often attract attention because of their large size.

You can follow these steps to decrease the number of these stinging insects around the school. (1) Reduce nesting sites before the colonies become established in early spring. (2) Seal all openings that allow access to hollow tubing, such as playground equipment. (3) Control wasp nests early in the season when colonies are small. (4) Deter yellowjackets by eliminating all food sources (open garbage cans that provide food and moisture).

**Keep Colorado schools pest free**