



# CLOSE TO HOME

## September! Yellow Jackets!

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"Many go fishing all their lives without knowing that it is not fish they are after."

Henry David Thoreau



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Fleas in a carpet

Yellow Jackets are a major pest problem in September. Their nests are now very large, often with several hundred insects in the colony. They are very hungry for anything we eat, especially at a picnic including meats, sweets, soft drinks and beer. They break through ceilings on a regular basis; We break through into their nests when we walk over their subterranean homes. Sound familiar?

Some Yellow Jackets are very docile. They will let you approach the nest site and are not at all alarmed with your presence.

Some are just the opposite. A simple passing by the nest and they attack, going straight for the face. They are western New York's version of "Killer Bees". Never assume you have a docile group!

Here are a few CastleGuard stories to illustrate the problem of Yellow Jackets.

A homeowner recently called mentioning a problem

with bees. She had left the house and wasn't returning till the problem was solved. The basement easily had two hundred dead yellow jackets on the floor, and more flying on the windows. This large nest was in the hollow cinder block, exposed in the basement. (She is now back home!)

We received two emergency calls within a week, one at 8:00 PM, another on Sunday morning at 8:00. These are not normal operating hours, but an emergency needs prompt attention. In both cases, yellow jackets had chewed a hole in the bedroom ceiling and infested a bedroom—one occurred overnight while the couple was sleeping. Both families escaped without a sting, but both also pay more attention to scratching noises at night!

Just in the past week, CastleGuard's top technician (ok, only technician) was treating the exterior foundation of a

house for ants when he stepped onto some ground cover and sunk in about 8 inches. He was immediately surrounded in yellow jackets (with no protective gear). Most exterminators become adept at races like the high hurdles due to hazards of the job. This one is no exception. Miraculously, there were no stings to report on this adventure.

Many more stories like these are already in the books for 2008. Stay tuned!

*On a serious note, if you have a yellow jacket nest on or in your house, it pays to have it professionally exterminated before the end of September. Once the cool weather arrives, nests are hard to locate and nearly impossible to dispatch. The result can be wandering yellow jackets throughout the house well past Thanksgiving. Though they are lethargic, they still sting!*



## THE PEST INSPECTOR'S JOURNAL!

THE ODD - THE SCARY - THE HUMOROUS

No pest problem is Too Small!

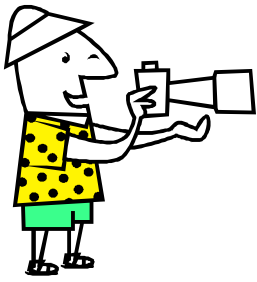
A customer recently told me a story about how a bird's nest became a major pest problem. We all know what it is like having a bird's nest close to the house, or in it. Appar-

ently sparrows had built a nest in a gable vent. They were busy collecting grass and trash for nesting, as well as being a general nuisance with staining and loud chirping at all hours of the day.

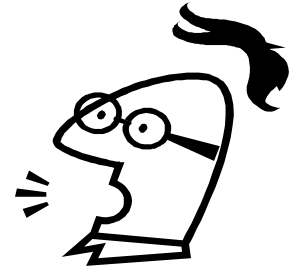
The issue became serious

when a bird picked up a hot cigarette butt for nesting material and carried it to the nest. The nest caught fire and burned the house down!





# From the Field



Romex spliced with knob and tube wiring



That sinking feeling...



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## YOUR QUESTIONS ANSWERED HERE!

Q: We have a problem with wasps that are burrowing in our front yard. They are huge! What are they?

A: What you are describing are Cicada Killer Wasps. Here is a picture of one.



Though these are very large wasps (1 1/4 inches), they are quite harmless and generally ignore people unless they are disturbed. They can give a painful sting if bothered enough.

They get their name from the prey they hunt—cicadas. Cicadas are caught and stung, killing them, and are then buried in the sandy soil where

the wasp egg hatches and feeds on the cicada. A truly fascinating wasp as long as they're at the neighbors!

The best method of preventing Cicada Killers from infesting lawns is to grow a thick, healthy grass.

Q: We have a problem with fleas. We have given our cat many baths and sprayed the carpets, but still we have them. Why are they so hard to get rid of, and what should we do?

A: I consider fleas the toughest pest problem to solve. Fleas are so small they can hide in many out of the way places, making it hard to reach them. On top of that, they have become resistant to many over the counter treatments.

The first place to start is with the veterinarian. The products they can prescribe



### ASK JOHN!

for fleas will both protect the pet and kill the fleas in the house. Without this first step, the other measures will take much longer to work.

If the house has a heavy infestation, a professional extermination is needed. CastleGuard uses an adulticide treatment with a growth regulator that stops the next generation of fleas from maturing.

Getting rid of fleas is not cheap. It's the price of living pest free with a pet.

Q: We have a portable generator we use in power outages. We plug it into a garage outlet and backfeed power into circuits in the house. Is this safe?

A: This is a fairly common practice that has two main safety concerns: First, does the cable taking in the power have the proper gauge for the power being generated? Fires can start if not. This method is not for the amateur electrician.

Secondly, the main breaker on the panel should be off so power is not fed to the street.

Professionally installed transfer switches are the safest way to utilize portable generators. Don't take chances!

