ASIAN GIANT HORNET STAKEHOLDER UPDATE #4

We’ve had lots going on with the Asian giant hornet program over the last several weeks! Like everyone else, WSDA staff who have been working from home for the past several weeks due to COVID-19. This has slightly slowed or forced us to adjust our plans for Asian giant hornet work, but we continue to move this project forward.

TRAPPING

The number one question we have been seeing lately on our Facebook page and the Asian giant hornet watch Facebook group has been about trapping. People have been wondering what types of traps work and when to trap. Read out

WHATCOM BEEKEEPERS AND EXPERIMENTAL TRAPS

The Mt. Baker Beekeeper association has been extremely supportive of the Asian giant hornet program and have been stepping up to help in the effort to detect Asian giant hornets in Washington. Dozens of beekeepers have agreed to receive, put up, and monitor experimental “sap traps” in an attempt to detect queens emerging this spring.

Trapping queens poses a serious challenge given their low numbers. Research indicates that they often eat sap from trees in the spring – hence the experimental sap traps. A picture below is an example of the setup. It consists of scarring the tree and putting up a sticky cardboard trap with a landing platform around the scar. The entire trap is then surrounded by chicken wire to keep birds and other wildlife out.

PUBLIC ASIAN GIANT HORNET TRAPPING

WSDA also issued public information on trapping last week. This consists of instructions to build a simple bottle trap that should catch hornets but be less attractive to bees. We suggest that this type of trapping begin in July, but those who are interested in doing so can put them up in April. We are asking those that create this trap to record its location on a trapping map as well as to send all weekly catches to our entomology lab, even if they do not have Asian giant hornets.

Check out our recent blog, Trapping for Asian giant hornets - 8 things to know, which has nearly 22,000 views already, which is even more than our initial pest alert blog.

NEW RESOURCES
WSDA FACTSHEETS

WSDA has created five new factsheets that are targeted to specific audiences: farmers, gardeners, outdoor workers, hikers and outdoor enthusiasts, and hunters. These are pdf documents that are easy to print and share. Spanish versions of the farmers and outdoor workers versions are also available.

WSU INFORMATION FOR BEEKEEPERS

Washington State University made a resource available for beekeepers on managing their hives with Asian giant hornet now in the state. This is not the final version but because of the importance of getting the information out, it is being shared now. The final version will be released once it clears WSU’s publication review process. We’ll update the link on our site to the new document when it is available.

CHECKING POSSIBLE ASIAN GIANT HORNET NEST

Last week our entomologists received a report that was suspicious and sounded like a possible Asian giant hornet queen establishing a new colony. A small team went to the location to check it out. While it did NOT end up being an Asian giant hornet colony, it did give the team an opportunity to don the new Asian giant hornet suits and try out the thermal imaging camera. It was good field experience for the program. The Facebook post about the effort reached over 20,000 people over the weekend and had over 1,000 likes.
OUTREACH

Over the past few weeks our outreach efforts have primarily been limited to social media – but that doesn’t mean it hasn’t been effective. One of our social media posts alone (letting gardeners know about Asian giant hornet) reached over 130,000 people.

In addition to our own posts on social media, several other Facebook pages have shared information about Asian giant hornet. Most recently, King 5 shared a story on their page and our communications staff has spent hours responding to over 900 comments on the story – primarily correcting misinformation or responding to reported sightings. The story also appears to be generating more reports through our website, though we have not been able to confirm any additional sightings.

HIRING STAFF FOR ASIAN GIANT HORNET WORK

We have posted for two positions to support our Asian giant hornet work – a hornet field technologist and an outreach specialist. Both of these positions close on April 14 and we are hoping to have them on staff in May.

ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENTS

Our pest program is working on developing a project-specific State Environmental Policy Act (SEPA) checklist. Unlike site-specific checklists which look at specific sites (such as for gypsy moth eradication), this type of checklist makes plans for how the program would address eradication in different environmental scenarios that could happen anywhere in the state. This is important as WSDA will need to conduct an eradication when a nest is found and the nest locations at this time are unknown.

When complete, the SEPA documents for this project will be made available for public review and comment.

AGH ADDED TO PRIORITY INVASIVE SPECIES LIST

At the last Washington Invasive Species Council meeting, WSDA presented information and made a request to add Asian giant hornet to the state’s priority list of invasive species. The council voted to add Asian giant hornet to the list and also approved adding Asian giant hornet to the web and mobile reporting apps.

WSDA and the council will issue a press release when the reporting apps are updated.

FUNDING

We are grateful to have received funding for Asian giant hornet detection and eradication work from both the state and federal government. Knowing how much funding we will have for the project enables us to move forward with much more certainty regarding what types of projects we will be able to afford to do in the coming year. State funding will support outreach, awareness, and community engagement. The federal funding will support detection survey and eradication response activities.