



As you probably know, the Asian hornet was introduced into southwest France about ten years ago. Since then, it has spread rapidly to most of France and is now reaching neighboring countries. It is a very destructive insect, as it preys on colonies of honey bees. To this point, the beekeepers have been doing most of the work, unsuccessfully, by destroying nests of these hornets with limited means.

Here is what happened and why I think that we need to show strong support for the French beekeepers: Around 2005, Asian hornets were found in southwest France for the first time. It was found that a few of them had been introduced accidentally (one hopes) in a shipment of pottery for bonsai.

The institutions in charge of controlling such pests essentially ignored them. Unfortunately, these hornets multiplied very rapidly because the predators that keep them in check in their original habitat are not present in Europe. They prey voraciously on honey bee colonies, killing them in no time by catching their foragers in flight, as they return from the fields, and by entering the hives to prey on the bees. They create huge nests that house very large colonies, high up in tall trees. Incidentally, you should know that they are also very dangerous to humans.

Now, the Asian hornet has spread to most of France and is expanding its range into other countries of Europe. It would be very easy to think that this is a French problem, and that we may just ignore it. But think again: What is around, comes around. All it would take is a few Asian hornets in a shipment of some goods from France to the port of Oakland, and we would have these pests in our apiaries. This is not farfetched, because that is the way they went from Southeast Asia to France. There are many examples of accidental and not-so-accidental pests and poor genetics introductions. This is how the varroa and tracheal mites, the Small Hive Beetle and many other pathogens have been spread nearly globally. The spread of the Asian hornet in Europe is not unlike that of the Africanized honey in the Americas.

So far, the beekeepers have been trying to control these hornets by destroying nests and capturing queens and hornets with all sorts of rudimentary means, and with little or no help from the government and other institutions. While the French beekeepers are willing to do the work, this petition is to pressure the relevant institutions to act appropriately in this situation. We need to show the French institutions that we are concerned by their inaction.

The petition requests that the French government help the beekeepers in the fight against the Asian hornet by re-classifying the pest, *Vespa velutina*, as an invasive and noxious species and by providing help in trapping these pests. The petition is in French and will ask you for your first name, surname, town, country and email address, and whether you wish to have your name visible on the petition. Following the registration, you will receive an email to confirm. Click on highlighted return link. [These notes by Jon Sevigny] http://www.petitions24.net/contre_le_frelon_vespa_velutina