

Crews vacuum 'murder hornets' out of Washington nest

October 24 2020



A Washington State Department of Agriculture worker holds two of the dozens of Asian giant hornets vacuumed from a tree Saturday, Oct. 24, 2020, in Blaine, Wash. Scientists in Washington state discovered the first nest earlier in the week of so-called murder hornets in the United States and worked to wipe it out Saturday morning to protect native honeybees. (AP Photo/Elaine Thompson)

Heavily protected crews in Washington state worked Saturday to destroy the first nest of so-called murder hornets discovered in the United States.

The state Agriculture Department had spent weeks searching, trapping and using [dental floss](#) to tie tracking devices to Asian giant hornets, which can deliver painful stings to people and spit venom but are the biggest threat to honeybees that farmers depend on to pollinate crops.

The nest found in the city of Blaine near the Canadian border is about the size of a basketball and contained an estimated 100 to 200 hornets, according to scientists who announced the find Friday.

Crews wearing thick protective suits vacuumed the invasive insects from the cavity of a tree into large canisters Saturday. The suits prevent the hornets' 6-millimeter-long stingers from hurting workers, who also wore face shields because the trapped hornets can spit a painful venom into their eyes.

The tree will be cut down to extract newborn hornets and learn if any queens have left the hive already, scientists said. Officials suspect more nests may be in the area and will keep searching. A news briefing was planned Monday on the status of the nest.



Sven Spichiger, Washington State Department of Agriculture managing entomologist, displays a canister of Asian giant hornets vacuumed from a nest in a tree behind him Saturday, Oct. 24, 2020, in Blaine, Wash. Scientists in Washington state discovered the first nest earlier in the week of so-called murder hornets in the United States and worked to wipe it out Saturday morning to protect native honeybees. Workers with the state Agriculture Department spent weeks searching, trapping and using dental floss to tie tracking devices to Asian giant hornets, which can deliver painful stings to people and spit venom but are the biggest threat to honeybees that farmers depend on to pollinate crops. (AP Photo/Elaine Thompson)



A Washington State Department of Agriculture worker displays an Asian giant hornet taken from a nest Saturday, Oct. 24, 2020, in Blaine, Wash. Scientists in Washington state discovered the first nest earlier in the week of so-called murder hornets in the United States and worked to wipe it out Saturday to protect native honeybees, officials said. (AP Photo/Elaine Thompson)



In photo provided by the Washington State Dept. of Agriculture, an Asian Giant Hornet wearing a tracking device is shown Thursday, Oct. 22, 2020 near Blaine, Wash. Scientists have discovered the first nest of so-called murder hornets in the United States and plan to wipe it out Saturday to protect native honeybees, officials in Washington state said Friday, Oct. 23, 2020. (Karla Salp/Washington Dept. of Agriculture via AP)



Washington State Department of Agriculture workers, wearing protective suits and working in pre-dawn darkness illuminated with red lamps, vacuum a nest of Asian giant hornets from a tree Saturday, Oct. 24, 2020, in Blaine, Wash. Scientists in Washington state discovered the first nest earlier in the week of so-called murder hornets in the United States and worked to wipe it out Saturday morning to protect native honeybees. (AP Photo/Elaine Thompson)



Wearing a protective suit, Washington State Department of Agriculture entomologist Chris Looney fills a tree cavity with carbon dioxide after vacuuming a nest of Asian giant hornets from inside it Saturday, Oct. 24, 2020, in Blaine, Wash. Scientists in Washington state discovered the first nest earlier in the week of so-called murder hornets in the United States and worked to wipe it out Saturday morning to protect native honeybees. Workers with the state Agriculture Department spent weeks searching, trapping and using dental floss to tie tracking devices to Asian giant hornets, which can deliver painful stings to people and spit venom but are the biggest threat to honeybees that farmers depend on to pollinate crops. (AP Photo/Elaine Thompson)



Sven Spichiger, Washington State Department of Agriculture managing entomologist, walks with a canister of Asian giant hornets vacuumed from a nest in a tree behind him Saturday, Oct. 24, 2020, in Blaine, Wash. Scientists in Washington state discovered the first nest earlier in the week of so-called murder hornets in the United States and worked to wipe it out Saturday morning to protect native honeybees. Workers with the state Agriculture Department spent weeks searching, trapping and using dental floss to tie tracking devices to Asian giant hornets, which can deliver painful stings to people and spit venom but are the biggest threat to honeybees that farmers depend on to pollinate crops. (AP Photo/Elaine Thompson)



Washington State Department of Agriculture Outreach & Education Specialist Cassie Cichorz is assisted in putting on a protective suite before assisting to eradicate a nest of Asian giant hornets Saturday, Oct. 24, 2020, in Blaine, Wash. Scientists in Washington state discovered the first nest earlier in the week of so-called murder hornets in the United States and plan to wipe it out Saturday to protect native honeybees, officials said. Workers with the state Agriculture Department spent weeks searching, trapping and using dental floss to tie tracking devices to Asian giant hornets, which can deliver painful stings to people and spit venom but are the biggest threat to honeybees that farmers depend on to pollinate crops. (AP Photo/Elaine Thompson)



Washington State Department of Agriculture workers pull on protective suits before attempting to eradicate a nest of Asian giant hornets from a tree Saturday, Oct. 24, 2020, in Blaine, Wash. Scientists in Washington state discovered the first nest earlier in the week of so-called murder hornets in the United States and worked to wipe it out Saturday morning to protect native honeybees. (AP Photo/Elaine Thompson)



Washington State Department of Agriculture entomologist Chris Looney looks at two of the dozens of Asian giant hornets he vacuumed from a nest in a nearby tree Saturday, Oct. 24, 2020, in Blaine, Wash. Scientists in Washington state discovered the first nest earlier in the week of so-called murder hornets in the United States and plan to wipe it out Saturday to protect native honeybees, officials said. Workers with the state Agriculture Department spent weeks searching, trapping and using dental floss to tie tracking devices to Asian giant hornets, which can deliver painful stings to people and spit venom but are the biggest threat to honeybees that farmers depend on to pollinate crops. (AP Photo/Elaine Thompson)

Despite their nickname and the hype that has stirred fears in an already bleak year, the world's largest hornets kill at most a few dozen people a year in Asian countries, and experts say it is probably far less.

Meanwhile, hornets, wasps and bees typically found in the United States kill an average of 62 people a year, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has said.

The real threat from Asian giant hornets—which are 2 inches (5 centimeters) long—is their devastating attacks on honeybees, which are already under siege from problems like mites, diseases, pesticides and loss of food.

The invasive insect is normally found in China, Japan, Thailand, South Korea, Vietnam and other Asian countries. Washington state and the Canadian province of British Columbia are the only places the hornets have been found on the continent.

The [nest](#) was found after the state Agriculture Department trapped some hornets this week and used dental floss to attach radio trackers to some of them.

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