

## ORIENTAL HORNET A SIGNAL TO BE DOCUMENTED

### What *Vespa orientalis* means for the region



#### STRATEGIC SIGNAL

Documented in northern Morocco since the scientific specimen collections of 2025, the presence of the Oriental hornet (*Vespa orientalis*) was reported again by the Observatory for the Protection of the Environment and Historical Monuments of Tangier (OPEMH) on 29 September 2026, in Tangier, Tetouan, M'diq and Fnideq. Without quantifying any damage or establishing a territorial spread, this statement renews vigilance at the end of the season, when colony activity peaks, and underlines the need to consolidate knowledge on the presence and distribution of the species.

At this stage, the available data remain insufficient to determine the extent of its establishment, its evolution and its actual range. The situation first calls for cross-checking and validating existing reports, so as to build consolidated knowledge of the phenomenon and assess its possible environmental, health and socio-economic implications for the region.

#### SPECIES BIOLOGY AND DYNAMICS

*Vespa orientalis* is a social hornet measuring 25 to 35 mm. The colony is annual: a mated queen overwinters and founds the nest in spring, the number of workers grows over the summer and numbers peak at the end of the season, before the nest declines and the new queens overwinter. This phenology makes late summer and autumn the most useful period for detection.

Adults seek sugary resources (nectar, honey, sap or ripe fruit), while larvae require animal protein. Workers therefore capture various invertebrates, including the honeybee *Apis mellifera*, which they can intercept in front of hive entrances. Nesting is opportunistic: soil, embankments, rock cavities, hollow walls, ducts and cavities in buildings. This flexibility explains the possible proximity to inhabited areas and makes colonies harder to locate.

#### LEVEL OF CONFIDENCE

**Documented facts.** The establishment of *Vespa orientalis* in northern Morocco has been documented since 2025, with no quantified damage to date. In Spain, the species is listed in the Spanish Catalogue of Invasive Alien Species; its predation on the honeybee (*Apis mellifera*) is established, with severe impacts on apiaries reported notably in the Campo de Gibraltar (MITECO).

**Points to be documented.** In the region, the extent of its presence and the location of nests remain to be determined; beekeeping losses and effects on fruit and pollination remain possible but unquantified.

**Interpretation caveats.** The detection of bee viruses in *V. orientalis* is not sufficient to establish their transmission between hives. Impacts observed in *V. crabro* or *V. velutina* cannot be transposed to this species, nor can Spanish measures be applied without adaptation to the regional context.

#### STRATEGIC ANALYSIS - WATCH POINTS

**Beekeeping.** The most exposed sector. Predation on the honeybee *Apis mellifera* weakens colonies to the point of destroying them, as observed in Andalusia. With no quantified losses in the region, the stakes would concern honey production, colony stocks and the cost of protecting hives (entrance reducers, wire mesh), Spanish practices that remain to be validated locally.

**Agriculture and pollination.** The species feeds on ripe fruit (figs, grapes, peaches, apples, pears), with a risk of downgrading harvests; pressure on bees could reduce orchard pollination. Effects not measured in the region.

**Public health.** Near nests, sometimes located in buildings, the risk lies in systemic reactions, up to anaphylaxis, among people allergic to Hymenoptera venom.

**Biodiversity.** Predation on invertebrates and competition with native pollinators warrant vigilance.

**Busy public spaces and work sites.** Nests located in buildings and on industrial or technical sites expose staff (maintenance, cleaning, brush clearing, work on structures) as well as users of schools, parks and public spaces: a safety issue, not a spread issue.

#### STRATEGIC ANALYSIS - IMPLICATIONS FOR THE REGION

The four localities cited in the local report all lie along the Region's coastal strip, a distribution consistent with the behaviour observed in the Iberian Peninsula, where one third of the 695 recorded observations are located less than one kilometre from the shoreline. The regional coastline, urbanised, densely built and agricultural, combines the conditions the species exploits.

The Andalusian population, established in the province of Cadiz since 2018, lies across a strait 14 kilometres wide at its narrowest point. The literature lists the movement of goods and vehicles, by sea and by road, among the dispersal pathways of the genus and recommends controls on imported agricultural produce and timber, without allowing an introduction pathway into Morocco to be established.

The challenge is to move from isolated reports to territorially grounded knowledge: nest locations, recurrence of observations, exposed areas and spatial trends.

#### STRATEGIC RECOMMENDATIONS

Proportionate to the level of evidence, under territorial coordination that could be provided by the various stakeholders concerned:

- Immediate priority, high feasibility:** Consolidate information. The competent services (Regional Directorate of Agriculture, ONSSA, ONCA, ANEF, health and veterinary services) could, together with research centres and beekeepers' representatives, cross-check reports and validate species identification, which the presence of *V. crabro* makes necessary. A geolocated inventory would then follow, depending on the needs, resources and coordination arrangements adopted.
- High priority, medium feasibility:** Raise awareness among beekeeping associations and cooperatives of the risks, the reporting of sightings and hive protection, on the basis of advice validated by specialists.
- Medium priority, gradual implementation:** Leave the treatment of confirmed nests, often concealed or underground, to professionals and competent services, working with local authorities and territorial authorities, in full safety. Avoid poisoned baits, which are harmful to other species.

#### SOURCES:

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- MITECO, *Vespa orientalis*, Memoria Técnica Justificativa, 2022; Orden TED/452/2025, BOE of 12 May 2025.
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