Bald-Faced Hornet Facts and Statistics

Target Keywords (list here and highlight in the article):

- Bald faced hornet facts
- Facts about bald faced hornets
- Bald faced hornet statistics

<Introduction>

While you're pruning a shrub, you hear a buzz. As you glance up, a gray, papery mass the size of a football is hanging about three feet from your face. Suddenly you're backing away very, very slowly.

Sound familiar? You've probably had a run-in with a bald-faced hornet nest. Knowing the facts about bald-faced hornets goes a long way toward protecting your family and home. Here are the key bald-faced hornet facts and statistics every homeowner should know before summer peaks.

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Fact #1: The bald-faced hornet isn't actually a hornet.

Despite the name, the bald-faced hornet (*Dolichovespula maculata*) is technically a large yellowjacket wasp, not a true hornet. They earned the "hornet" label by being big, aggressive, and absolutely not interested in your excuses. Bald-faced hornets fall under *Dolichovespula*, putting them in yellowjacket territory, rather than the true hornet genus *Vespa*.

Fact #2: Their appearance makes them impossible to miss.

Workers measure 12-15 mm in length (about half an inch), and queens are around 18-22 mm, nearly a full inch. The signature look? A jet-black body with bold white marking across the face, two diagonal stripes near the midsection and white banding at the tip of the abdomen. Think of them as nature's warning label. The high contrast coloring is a "Do Not Disturb" sign written in insect.

Fact #3: Their nests are impressive, and that's the problem.

Bald-faced hornets build their iconic grey, paper nests by chewing weathered wood fibers and mixing them with saliva to create pulp. This creates a self-made, multi-chambered structure with 2-4 internal horizontal combs and a single-entry hole at the bottom.

By late summer, these nests can measure up to 14 inches wide and more than 24 inches long. They're almost always at least three feet off the ground, found hanging in trees, under roof overhangs and on utility poles.

Fact #4: A colony starts with one queen, peaks at hundreds, then disappears.

Each spring, a single overwintered queen emerges and builds a starter nest from scratch. From June through August, workers hatch and take over foraging, building and defense

duties while the queen focuses on laying eggs. Come late summer, the colony hits its peak of 100 to 400 workers, all infertile females extremely committed to their jobs.

Then in the fall, the whole thing collapses, and the original queen and all workers die off. Only newly inseminated queens survive, tucking into protected crevices to wait out the cold to start the whole process over again next year. Bald-faced hornets never reuse a nest. The old one is always left abandoned.

Fact #5: Their sting is no joke, and it comes with backup.
This is one of the bald-faced hornet statistics that catches most people off guard. Bald-faced hornets have smooth stingers, which means they can sting repeatedly. When one stings, it releases alarm pheromones that signal nearby workers to join in. What starts as one encounter can escalate to a coordinated swarm in seconds with zero warning.

Sting symptoms include sharp pain, itching and localized swelling that typically resolves within 24 hours for most people. For anyone with an allergy to insect venom, the risk of anaphylaxis is very real and requires immediate medical attention.

Fact #6: They're ecologically valuable, but hazardous when too close.
Bald-faced hornets earn their keep in nature. Adults fuel themselves on sugars like nectar, fruit juices and plant sap, making them low level pollinators. When feeding larvae, they hunt soft-bodied insects like caterpillars, aphids, flies and spiders, delivering a built-in pest suppression service to gardens and green spaces.

Near your deck, playground or HVAC unit? That's a different story. A disturbed colony near a high-traffic area is a safety risk. If you spot a nest on or near your property, don't try to remove it yourself. A licensed pest professional can assess the situation and treat or remove the nest safely.

The facts about bald-faced hornets paint a picture of an insect that's equal parts impressive and dangerous. Whether you're brushing up on bald-faced hornet facts before a summer yard project or digging into bald-faced hornet statistics after a close call, the takeaway is the same: know what you're dealing with, don't go near the nest and contact a pest control professional.

<Image suggestions>

1. *Photo of bald-faced hornet nest.*
2. *Photo of bald-faced hornet. - use photo by Tom Myers*

<Sources (if outside of PW.org)>

https://naturemappingfoundation.org/natmap/facts/bald-faced_hornet_712.html

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