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A LITTLE BIT COUNTRY
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Butterflies Abound

A few folks have asked about the yellow and white butterflies which are flying around the countryside in great abundance. They are of the Pieridae family. According to Jan Knodel, NDSU Extension Entomologist, there are at least 14 species of this group which occur in North Dakota and seldom do they cause economic losses in field crops.

The life cycle of all butterflies starts with the egg which is laid by the winged adults. The egg will hatch resulting in a caterpillar, often called larva. The larva will then transform to the pupa stage. The next stage completing metamorphosis is the winged adult.

In North Dakota, different butterflies may overwinter as eggs, as partly grown larva, as pupa but rarely as winged adults. She feels many of the adult winged butterflies we see today have likely migrated with the wind from areas that have warmer winter climates.

From its emergence, the female adults butterfly seeks out the proper host plant on which she deposits her eggs. Larva from the eggs is often referred to as “eating machines”. The larvae pass through five stages, growing larger with each molting of the era skeleton. Depending on the species, the larva may last for a week to several months.

The majority of adult butterflies are nectar feeders thus they are attracted to flowers for sugar, a source of energy and water.

The cabbage butterfly, both male and female, is white. It likes plants of the mustard family, including canola. In North Dakota gardens, the larva are known to feed on lettuce, cabbage and other cole crops such as cauliflower and broccoli.

If you are among those who have an interest in butterflies, including identification, I suggest downloading the NDSU Extension publication E-1266 titled “Butterfly Gardening in North Dakota”.

Hornet Season is Here

Years ago I was stung in the neck by a yellowjacket. I thought nothing of it until feeling a “hot” sensation throughout my body and a 4-H parent noticed my face was red and very swollen. This memorable moment happened during a September reorganization meeting of a 4-H Club and landed me in the hospital. Ever since, I am reminded that yellowjackets are more emotional and aggressive during August and into September.

Yellowjackets (or hornets) belong to the Vespidae family which is active outside during the daylight hours.

Nearly the entire colony is in the nest during the evening and night-time hours, so control measures should be applied to the nest then. There are many insecticides labeled for control of hornets and yellowjackets. The difficulty is making the treatment without being stung. Usually an aerosol spray of one of the many fast-acting wasp killer aerosols will quickly kill all workers present in nest. Examples are permethrin, synergized pyrethrins or pyrethroid insecticides. After treatment, check the nest for any activity the following day and re-treat if necessary. Nests should be removed to avoid attracting dermestid beetle infestations at some later time and to keep wasp pupae from possibly re-establishing the nest. When dealing with yellowjacket nests in structures like homes, the nest entrance should never be plugged from the outside. If constrained yellowjacket workers cannot escape to the outside, they may locate a way to escape toward the inside of the home or structure, creating a possible stinging threat for people inside. Yellowjacket nests become an important source of carpet and other dermestid beetle infestations in the home, so the nest should be removed whenever possible. When outside enjoying your picnic, avoid wearing bright colors and perfumes which are attractive to hornets and yellowjackets.