

Diffusion of *Vespa velutina* in Italy

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Vespa velutina Lepeletier 1836 was detected in France in 2005 in the area of Bordeaux and since its arrival it has spread in a great part of the country and in neighbouring countries. A monitoring activity for intercepting *V. velutina* has started since 2007 in the Italian regions of Piedmont and Liguria which border on France to the West. The main communication routes that join Italy and France, and freight traffic patterns were taken into account. Bottle traps baited with lager beer were used and the trapped insects were removed and determined weekly throughout the active season. The first *V. velutina* specimen, a male, was trapped at Loano (Savona Province, Liguria Region) on 19th November 2012. As a consequence of this catching, the monitoring activity continued in 2013, focusing on the Ligurian coast, and the local beekeeper associations were alarmed. These activities permitted to ascertain the presence of yellow-legged hornet workers in several localities in the provinces of Imperia (west Liguria) and Cuneo (southern Piedmont); active nests of *V. velutina* were also detected and destroyed in some of such localities. The further diffusion of *V. velutina* in Italy is presently monitored in a larger part of the country.