

**P076***Assessment of the invasive wasp Vespula germanica in South Africa***Karla Haupt**, Pia Addison, Ruan Veldtman, Heidi Prozesky

Invasive social insects stand out as successful invaders worldwide. One such example is *Vespula germanica* which has invaded South Africa. It flourishes in newly invaded ecosystems, where it has become a major pest in urban settings. The wasps negatively affect tourism and outdoor activities and are also agricultural pests globally, with negative impacts recorded for viticulture, apiculture and horticulture. There is a gap in the research on the wasps in South Africa, but negative impacts are already prevalent in the core of the wasps' current range. This study aims to fill the existing research gap by gathering the relevant baseline data on the species. Bait preference trials were conducted on eight sites over two seasons, with meat-based lures in yellow delta traps proving to be the most effective method in trapping the wasps. Imported artificial lures also show promising results and are now being further tested. The distribution of *V. germanica* was determined through bait-trapping in combination with public observations. A comprehensive questionnaire was completed by forty farm owners about the wasps on their property with the objective of determining the wasps' current realised negative impacts. A wide variety of subjects are dealt with in the questionnaire, including the farmers' awareness about the wasps; number of nests found; the future management of the wasps and the viability of an eradication programme. These preliminary findings form an integral part of the greater Invasive Wasp Project and will help motivate the need for an immediate eradication programme for the species. It is the first step in assisting relevant stakeholders to make informed decisions in implementing future monitoring (short- or long term), control and possibly an eradication programme for the wasps.