**Velvet Ants ("Cow Killers")**

***Dasymutilla occidentalis***

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| **Color:** | Black, with areas of very bright red, orange, yellow or white |
| **Legs:** | 6 |
| **Shape:** | Females – wingless, ant-like; Males – winged, wasp-like |
| **Size:** | 1/8 – 7/8” (3-23 mm) |
| **Antennae:** | True |
| **Region:** | Found throughout U.S. |

The common name of “velvet ant” is misleading because velvet ants are actually wasps. They get the velvet part of their name from the very fuzzy females, which are wingless and often brightly colored. Various species are found throughout the United States.

**Habits**

Female velvet ants dig into the nesting chambers of ground-nesting bees and wasps and lay their eggs on the larvae inside. When the immature velvet ant is born, it eats its host and then spins its cocoon within the pupal case of its host.

**Habitat**

Female velvet ants are typically seen running somewhat erratically on the ground, especially on bare or sandy areas in the warm summer months. They occasionally enter structures for insect prey. Males are often found on flowers, although some species are nocturnal.

**Threats**

Female velvet ants have a very potent sting that has earned them the nickname “cow-killer.” Male velvet ants lack a stinger but have wings.

**Prevention:**Velvet ants are solitary and usually found only one at a time. To avoid their painful sting, contact a pest management professional to safely remove any velvet ants found in your home.