

A Bug's Life

Cow killer ant

Family: Mutillidae; *Dasymutilla occidentalis*

Fun facts

- Family called velvet ants, but are wingless, solitary, female wasps
- Not aggressive, but female can produce painful sting in defense (venom has low toxicity)
- Thick exoskeleton and dense hairs make them almost indestructible
- Make squeaking sound when threatened

Identification

Female: 3/4" long, looks like a large, wingless ant, dense hair, black and bright reddish-orange patterns on body, black legs

Male: Black wings, different color pattern than female, some small patches of reddish-hairs on abdomen

Management

- Occasionally, males are found in basements entering through window wells
- Females are predators, depositing eggs in nests of other ground-nesting insects like bees or wasps
- Avoid handling or stepping on, especially with bare feet
- no recommendation for control

