

Bee Alert: Africanized Honey Bee Facts



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Bee Prepared

Africanized honey bees (AHB)—also called "killer bees"—became established in Texas in 1990 and are spreading to other southern states. AHB are expected to enter southern California by the mid-1990s and eventually migrate throughout the state. Although its "killer" reputation has been greatly exaggerated, the presence of AHB will increase the chances of people being stung. Learning about the AHB and taking certain precautions can lower the risk of being injured by this new insect in our environment.

The Africanized honey bee is closely related to the European honey bee used in agriculture for crop pollination and honey production. The two types of bees look the same and their behavior is similar in many respects. Neither is likely to sting when gathering nectar and pollen from flowers, but both will sting in defense if provoked. A swarm of bees in flight or briefly at rest seldom bothers people. However, all bees become defensive when they settle, begin producing wax comb and raising young.

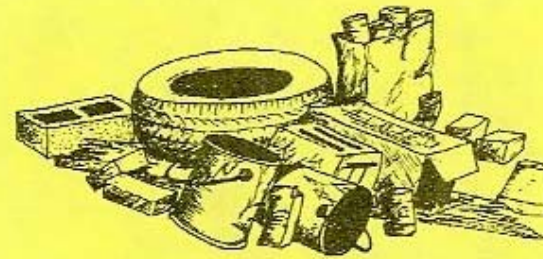
Africanized and European Honey Bees

- Look the same
- Protect their nest and sting in defense
- Can sting only once
- Have the same venom
- Pollinate flowers
- Produce honey and wax

Africanized honey bees are less predictable and more defensive than European honey bees. They are more likely to defend a greater area around their nest. They respond faster in greater numbers, although each bee can sting only once.

Africanized Honey Bees

- Respond quickly and sting in large numbers
- Can sense a threat from people or animals 50 feet or more from nest
- Sense vibrations from power equipment 100 feet or more from nest
- Will pursue an enemy 1/4 mile or more
- Swarm frequently to establish new nests
- Nest in small cavities and sheltered areas



AHB nest in many locations where people may encounter them. Nesting sites include: empty boxes, cans, buckets or other containers; old tires; infrequently used vehicles; lumber piles; holes and cavities in fences, trees or the ground; sheds, garages and other outbuildings; and low decks or spaces under buildings. *Remove potential nest sites around buildings. Be careful wherever bees may be found.*

General Precautions

- Listen for buzzing indicating a nest or swarm of bees
- Use care when entering sheds or outbuildings where bees may nest
- Examine work area before using lawn mowers, weed cutters, and other power equipment
- Examine areas before tying up or penning pets or livestock
- Be alert when participating in all outdoor sports and activities
- Don't disturb a nest or swarm—contact a pest control company or an emergency response organization
- Teach children to be cautious and respectful of **all** bees
- Check with a doctor about bee sting kits and procedures if sensitive to bee stings
- Develop a safety plan for your home and yard
- Organize a meeting to inform neighbors about the AHB to help increase neighborhood safety

Bee-Proofing Your Home

- Remove possible nesting sites around home and yard
- Inspect outside walls and eaves of home and outbuildings
- Seal openings larger than 1/8" in walls, around chimneys and plumbing
- Install fine screens (1/8" hardware cloth) over tops of rain spouts, vents and openings in water meter/utility boxes
- From spring to fall check once or twice a week for bees entering or leaving the same area of your home or yard



As a general rule, stay away from **all** honey bee swarms and colonies. If bees are encountered, get away quickly. While running away, try to protect face and eyes as much as possible. Take shelter in a car or building. Water or thick brush does **not** offer enough protection. Do not stand and swat at bees; rapid motions will cause them to sting.

What To Do If Stung

- Go quickly to a safe area
- Remove stinger as soon as possible
- Don't squeeze stinger; pressure will release more venom
- Scrape stinger out with fingernail, knife blade or credit card
- Wash sting area with soap and water like any other wound
- Apply ice pack for a few minutes to relieve pain and swelling
- Seek medical attention if breathing is troubled, if stung numerous times or if allergic to bee stings

Contributions of European Honey Bees

- Provide 80% of the bee pollination required for fruit, vegetables, flowers and seed crops
- Pollinate forage crops such as alfalfa and clover which are fed to dairy and meat animals
- Produce honey, wax and other products

Hives of European honey bees (EHB) managed by beekeepers play an important part in our lives. These bees are necessary for the pollination of many crops. One-third of our diet relies on honey bee pollination.

Efforts taken to control Africanized honey bees (AHB) must assure the continued maintenance of beekeepers' hives. If EHB were eliminated in an area, the wild Africanized honey bees would quickly fill the gap.



People can coexist with the AHB by learning about the bee and its habits, supporting beekeeping efforts and taking a few precautions.

To order copies or duplication master write:
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If attacked by bees, leave the area quickly and find shelter in a building or car!

Honey bees are not the only stinging insects people may encounter. People are often stung by other bees and wasps that look and behave differently from honey bees.

Stinging Insects *



European honey bee



Africanized honey bee



Bumblebee



Yellow jacket



Mud dauber



Paper wasp



Carpenter bee

* All insects shown approximately life size.