

## **Africanized Honey Bee PSA**

Recently there has been an increase in bee activity in the area due to blooming of certain trees and other reasons. The following information is intended to inform the community on honey bee behavior, preventative measures that can be taken, and what to do in case of an attack.

### **History**

- There are two predominant types of bees that our found in our area the European Honey Bee and the Africanized Honey Bee. The only way to determine the difference in these would be in a laboratory under microscope.
- Typically European Honey Bee will swarm once every 12 months however the Africanized Honey Bee may swarm as often as every six months. This is important for you to know, because if the Africanized Honey Bee swarms more often, the likelihood of your encountering an Africanized Honey Bee swarm increases drastically.
- Since Africanized Honey Bees swarm much more frequently than other honey bees, the swarms may spend a day or two clustered in impressive hanging clumps on branches, or in other temporary locations until the bees settle on a new nesting site.

### **Public Risks:**

- Due to heightened defensive behavior, Africanized Honey Bee can be a risk to humans.
- Children, the elderly and handicapped individuals are at the highest risk of a deadly attack due to their inability or hampered ability to escape an attack.

- Africanized Honey Bee are agitated by vibrations like those caused by power equipment, tractors, lawnmowers, etc.
- Also their nesting habits often put them in close proximity to humans.
- These precautions are not suggested to make people fearful of honey bees but only to encourage caution and respect of honey bees.

## **Prevention:**

- The Africanized Honey Bee will occupy a much smaller space than the European Honey Bee. Known Africanized Honey Bee nesting locations include but are not limited to : water meter boxes, metal utility poles, cement blocks, junk piles, cavities in the ground, old tires, hanging exposed tree limbs, just to name a few.
- One rarely finds European colonies in any of these locations because they prefer to nest in larger cavities like those provided by tree hollows, chimneys, etc.
- A homeowner can ‘bee proof’ his or her property by eliminating possible nesting sites. This can be accomplished by removing any unnecessary debris from an area and closing off wall, chimney, electrical and plumbing-related gaps that are more than 30 mm wide using a small mesh hardware cloth or caulking. This will limit bee access to potential nesting sites. Finally, one should check walls and eaves of structures regularly, looking for bee activity.
- Prior to doing yard work or trimming of any vegetation the person should walk around and visually check for any bees in the areas mentioned above.

## **What to do if you are attacked:**

- RUN away quickly. Do not stop to help others. However, small children and the disabled may need some assistance.

- As you are running, pull your shirt up over your head to protect your face, but make sure it does not slow your progress. This will help keep bees from targeting the sensitive areas around your head and eyes.
- Continue to RUN. Do not stop running until you reach shelter, such as a vehicle or building. A few bees may follow you indoors. However, if you run to a well-lit area, the bees will tend to become confused and fly to windows. Do not jump into water! The bees will wait for you to come up for air. If you are trapped for some reason, cover up with blankets, sleeping bags, clothes, or whatever else is immediately available.
- Do not swat at the bees or flail your arms. Bees are attracted to movement and crushed bees emit a smell that will attract more bees.
- Once you have reached shelter or have outrun the bees, remove all stingers. When a honey bee stings, it leaves its stinger in the skin. This kills the bee so it can't sting again, but it also means that venom continues to enter into the wound for a short time.
- Do not pull the stingers out with tweezers or your fingers. This will only squeeze more venom into the wound. Instead, scrape the stinger out sideways using your fingernail, the edge of a credit card, or other straight-edged object.
- If you see someone being attacked by bees, encourage them to run away or seek shelter. Do not attempt to rescue them yourself. Call 911 to report a serious stinging attack. The emergency response personnel in your area have probably been trained to handle bee attacks.
- If you have been stung more than 15 times, or are feeling ill, or if you have any reason to believe you may be allergic to bee stings, seek medical

attention immediately. The average person can safely tolerate 10 stings per pound of body weight. This means that although 500 stings can kill a child, the average adult could withstand more than 1100 stings.

In closing, if you see a swarm of bees on a tree limb or any exposed area keep clear approximately 100 feet or the width of a 4 lane highway is a good distance. If you have a hive or a colony of bees located on your property or on your home, keep away of the area and contact an exterminator. The fire department will respond to bee attacks where an individual has been stung, but not to remove any bees inside a building, house, or personal property.

Sources: **United States Department of Agriculture**

<http://ars.usda.gov/Research/docs>.

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<http://entnemdept.ufl.edu/creatures/misc/bees/ahb.htm>