

Contact Information

If you would like more information regarding the Africanized Honey Bee, contact:

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If you would like more information on pest control for AHB, contact:

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Remember, if you are under attack by a swarm of bees, leave the area quickly and seek shelter in a building or car!!!

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THE AFRICANIZED HONEY BEE (AHB)



A Brief History

African Honey Bees (AHB) were bred with European Honey Bees in an attempt to create a honey bee that would better suit tropical conditions. It was expected that when mated with European Honey Bees, the African Honey Bees would lose their more aggressive nature. However, that was not the case, and in 1957, 26 African queen bees escaped from the breeding program in Sao Paulo, Brazil. AHB became established and expanded its range through South and Central America. The first report of AHB in the United States was made in Hidalgo, Texas, on October 1990.

Africanized vs. European Honey Bees...

Similarities

- Appearance.
- Response to venom.
- Single sting.

Africanized Honey Bee (AHB)

- Aggressive defense and stinging.
- Sixteen times as many swarms per year.
- Ten times as many stings per encounter.
- Not selective of nesting sites.
- Defend their nests with less provocation, in greater numbers and for longer distances.
- As of July 2004, there have been 14 AHB sting fatalities in the U.S.

European Honey Bee (EHB)

- Less defensive, easier to manage.
- Swarms once or twice a year.
- Selective of nesting sites.

Which One Is the AHB?

It is difficult to distinguish the Africanized Honey Bee from the European Honey Bee via visual means. Only through further testing (e.g. DNA) can the species be verified.



Someone who is stung may easily misinterpret other insects as AHBs. A brief comparison can help to better distinguish these stinging insects.



Honey Bees: Very hairy. Orange or yellow-orange color, at times dark gray. Collect pollen in a basket on their hind legs.



Bumblebees: Very hairy and stout bodies. Black and yellow markings, also orange or orange-red marking on the abdomen.



Yellowjackets: Not hairy. Wasps with a definite waist. Black and bright yellow color. Body is more compact than a paper wasp.



Paper wasps: Not hairy. Reddish to black with yellow rings. More elongated body than other species.

General Precautions for AHB

- Listen for buzzing which can indicate a swarm or nest of bees.
- When working outdoors, be alert to any nearby nests or colonies.
- Examine your work area before you use any power equipment which may disturb the AHB.
- AHB nesting sites can include buckets, cans, empty boxes (in trees or the ground), holes or cavities in fences, boxes including electrical, meter, and agricultural valves.



If Attacked...RUN!!!

Though it is easy to understand someone's initial reaction to become frightened and swat at a bee or other insect, it's extremely important not to do this with AHBs. This action may provoke the bees even more.

Bees release an "alarm pheromone" after they sting, which signals others to come and attack. In the case of AHBs, this could mean almost the entire hive. If you get stung, move away from the area immediately and find shelter in a car or building.

If no such shelter is immediately available, run away. AHBs fly approximately 12-15 mph, so most of us can outrun them. Run as far as you can since Africanized Honey Bees will continue their chase for up to a 1/4 of a mile.

Do not try to hide in water. They can remain in the area for 30 minutes or longer.

Stings to the chest or lower extremities are less severe than those suffered to the head or face. Therefore, make sure you cover your head and face while escaping. Try to find a towel or a blanket. If you don't have any of those, use a jacket or shirt.

Never stand still or get yourself trapped in a place or situation where you cannot escape the attacking bees.