

ESP FOCUS

Africanized Honey Bees



You could be stung by Mother Nature!

In addition to the earthquakes, fires and winter storms that have occurred in Southern California during the past decade, Mother Nature has introduced a new threat - Africanized Honey Bees.

The bees first appeared in the United States in Texas in 1990. Since then, they have migrated to other southwestern states. Their presence in California was first confirmed in October 1994.

As of late November 2000, Africanized Honey Bees have colonized a 48,900-square mile area of Southern California. The colonized area includes all or parts of Imperial, Kern, Los Angeles, Orange, Riverside, San Bernardino, San Diego and Ventura counties.

Because Africanized Honey Bees attack in larger swarms than their European cousins, multiple stings are the rule, rather than the exception.

Wherever you live, work or play, use the recommendations on the reverse side of this Focus Sheet to help reduce your risk of death and injury from Africanized Honey Bee stings.

Each month, ESP will examine a different hazard that could affect Californians and offer suggestions on how to reduce its impacts. These hazards are not limited to the month featured in the ESP Focus Sheet and can occur at any time.



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Fact vs. Fiction

In many ways, Africanized Honey Bees and European Honey Bees are similar. Both:

- Have the same appearance
- Sting only once
- Have the same venom

Africanized Honey Bees also have their own characteristics. They:

- Are more aggressive
- Guard a larger area around their hives
- Become upset more easily by humans, machinery and loud noises
- Respond faster and in larger swarms
- Chase threatening humans and animals for as much as a quarter mile.

Nest Sites

Africanized Honey Bees are not choosy about where they settle. Likely nesting sites include:

- Abandoned or rarely used vehicles
- Empty containers
- Places and objects with holes
- Fences
- Old tires
- Trees
- In or around structures
- Garages
- Outbuildings
- Sheds

Creating a Safer Environment

To make your environment safer and reduce your risk of a sting:

- Teach children to use caution and respect all bees.
- Teach children to notify a teacher or adult if they find a nest or swarm.
- Eliminate all potential nesting sites.
- Check walls and eaves of all structures.
- Close off wall, chimney and plumbing-related gaps that are more than 1/8 inch large
- Cover rain spouts, vents, etc. with 1/8" hardware cloth.
- Watch for regular entrance and exit routes used by swarms during spring, summer and fall.
- Meet with neighbors to discuss the threat by Africanized Honey Bees and to increase community preparedness.
- Put together safety plans for your home and place of work.

Avoiding an Attack

Reduce your chances of being stung by taking precautions:

- Check work areas, yards, pens and other buildings before using power equipment
- Call a pest control company or emergency response agency to handle nests or swarms.
- Remain alert for bees while participating in outdoor sports, games and other activities.
- Walk away and stay away if you find a swarm or nest.

Reacting to an Attack

If a swarm of bees attacks:

- Run away in a straight line for at least one-half mile if shelter is unavailable. Cover your face and eyes with a jacket and hide in a car or house if a bee or swarm begins to chase you.
- Find a safe area as soon as possible.
- Do not jump into water.

Treating Stings

If a bee or bees sting you:

- Remove the stinger quickly; scrape it out with a fingernail, knife blade or credit card; **do not** release more venom by squeezing the stinger.
- Wash the affected area with soap and water.
- Apply a cold pack to relieve pain.
- See a doctor if breathing is difficult, you are stung several times or if you are allergic to bee stings.

Extracted and adapted from "Bee Alert: Africanized Honey Bee Facts," published by the Cooperative Extension, University of California Division of Agriculture and Natural Resources.

GETTING IT DONE IN 2001 PREPARING FOR ALL HAZARDS



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