



AFRICANIZED HONEY BEE

In 1956, a breed of African honeybee was brought to Brazil in an effort to increase honey production. When these bees interbred with European honeybees, they produced a new variety of bees called the "Africanized honey bee."

These bees are sometimes referred to as "killer bees" because of their aggressively defensive behavior around their nests. Although the government regulates bee keeping and bee transportation, the Africanized honeybee has now become part of California's environment and can be found in areas along with the European honeybee.

Both varieties of bees are valued for pollination, honey, and beeswax. The Africanized honeybee looks and sounds like a European honeybee. Both types of bee's sting once and the effect of the sting are similar. However, the two types of bees differ in several important ways:

- Africanized honeybees build nests any place that provides some protection from the weather. They nest in walls or empty structures like old tractors, trailers, cars or equipment. They find hollow trees, stumps, and animal holes a good place to build nests. They even nest underground in irrigation pipes, meter boxes and drainage ditches. They can be found nesting around trash areas, in woodpiles, and in bushes or shrubs.
- A key difference from the European honeybee is how Africanized honeybees behave when their nests are disturbed. They are aggressively protective of their young and respond quickly by viciously stinging a suspected intruder. They may attack within five feet or more from the nest. Equipment vibration can activate bees from a distance of 100 feet or more.
- Africanized honeybees may continue the defense of their nest, by pursuing an individual for a distance of 1/4 mile or more, and in some cases, for a period lasting several hours.

What should someone do if they encounter Africanized honeybees?

- Protect the head, eyes, nose, and mouth with hands, arms or clothing. Stingers, which remain in the skin, leave an odor that attracts other bees to sting in that spot.
- Get out of the area as quickly as possible.
- Get into a shelter such as a vehicle or building. Some bees may follow you in, but you will get away from the majority of bees in the swarm.

- Seek professional medical care. Although the toxicity of the Africanized honeybee is similar to the European honeybee, multiple stings can cause troubled breathing or trigger an allergic reaction that could lead to death.
- Report suspicious bee activity to a supervisor or employer.