

Africanized Honey Bees

Taking responsibility to educate the public

The Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services is the regulatory agency responsible for protecting the beekeeping or apiary industry. Without the pollination that managed European honey bee colonies provide, 1/3rd of the food we eat in Florida would disappear.

Soon after, they migrated to the southwest US. Africanized bees most likely entered Florida on cargo ships or shipments from Central and South America.

Protection through Detection

Apiary inspection plays a vital role in Florida Agriculture as FDACS inspectors work to prevent the introduction and establishment of honey bee pests and diseases. The Department has the most comprehensive state program (e.g., number of inspectors and traps) to prevent the further accidental introduction of unwanted Africanized bees. FDACS along with other stakeholders formed the Africanized Honey Bee Task Force to educate first responders and other targeted groups on AHB emergencies. The Honey Bee Technical Council, established by Florida Statute, has developed standards for requeening colonies and recommended best management practices.

Apiary industry's efforts

To discourage Africanized bees from nesting, beekeepers are:

Placing managed hives in public parks and on private lands – ***if Africanized bees come into an area to forage and don't find adequate food because of managed colonies in the area, they will move on.***

Requeening their colonies with EHB queens – ***this ensures hives do not become infiltrated with AHB queens.***

Without properly managed honey bee colonies, agricultural productivity would suffer. But there would be another serious outcome – Africanized bees could easily move into areas without managed colonies. Though the Africanized bee is established in Florida, through education, trapping programs, and the help of managed European honey bee colonies, we

can attempt to keep Africanized bee populations low. We can learn to live with them, as we have learned to live with other dangerous stinging insects such as the imported fire ant, yellow jackets and others.

Africanized bee history

African honey bees were brought to Brazil in the 1950's for testing as possible alternatives to the gentle European honey bee because of their reputation of being hardy in tropical environments. Some were accidentally released, and then spread throughout South and Central America, and Mexico.



Florida Department of
Agriculture and Consumer Services
Adam H. Putnam
Commissioner

Division of Plant Industry
Richard Gaskalla, Director

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BEE AWARE of your environment

Protect yourself from stinging insects



Africanized Honey Bee Potential Hive Locations

Treat stings

- Find a safe area as soon as possible.
- Remove stinger by scraping it out with a fingernail or credit card; squeezing the stinger will release more venom.
- Wash affected area with soap and water and apply ice pack.
- See a doctor if breathing is difficult, if you are stung several times, or you are allergic to bee stings.

Create a safe environment

- Teach children to use caution and respect all bees and other insects.
- Teach children to notify a teacher or adult if they find a nest or swarm.
- Eliminate potential nesting sites.
- Check walls and eaves of structures.
- Close off wall, chimney and plumbing-related gaps that are more than 1/8" 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.

Avoid an attack

- Prepare a safety plan for your home and work place.
- Meet with neighbors to increase community awareness and preparedness.
- Obtain bee sting kits (over-the-counter or prescription).
- Remain alert for bees. Look for bees in work areas before using power equipment
- Walk away and stay away if you see a swarm or nest.
- Run away in a straight line, cover your face and eyes and hide in a car or house if a bee or swarm begins to chase you.
- Contact a local pest control operator to remove the nest.

Key Words/Acronyms

AHB - Africanized honey bees

Apiary - pertaining to bees

EHB - European honey bees

Foraging - searching for food

Nests - established colony of bees

Pollination - transfer of pollen which results in the formation of a seed

Requeening - replacing with younger queens to increase production numbers or to ensure the queen is not an AHB

Swarming - bee colony's method of reproducing itself. AHBs are not usually defensive during swarming because they are not defending an established nest.

FDACS/DPI Helpline
888-397-1517

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