



DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH County of Riverside

INFORMATIONAL BULLETIN NO. 51-06-DES

DISTRICT ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES DIVISION

AFRICANIZED HONEY BEES

Africanized Honey Bees have been present in California since 1994. Although the dangers associated with these so-called “killer bees” have been exaggerated, the chance of being stung is greater with these bees than with normal, European Honey Bees. Both types of bees are similar in appearance, sting only once, and have the same venom. Knowing the dangers and habits associated with these types of bees might help save one from a painful sting!

Recognizing Africanized Honey Bees

Africanized Honey Bees can look and act the same as their European brethren, and are often mistaken for these docile bees. Sight alone is not an effective tool for identification. There are certain traits, however, that one can pick-up on to hopefully avoid these bees.

- All bees will defend their hive, but Africanized Bees will do so aggressively, often unprovoked.
- Africanized Bees are more likely to sense a threat at greater distances, become more upset with less reason, and sting in much greater numbers.
- Individual foraging European and Africanized bees are highly unlikely to sting. A swarm rarely stings people when in flight or temporarily at rest. However, established Africanized colonies are more highly defensive toward perceived predators than European colonies. This is what most often leads to unprovoked attacks.
- Africanized Honey Bees will nest in smaller cavities and sometimes underground.

What To Do If You're Attacked

- Get away from the bees as quickly as possible. Run in a straight line away from the swarm. Try and protect yourself inside a structure such as a car or building. Africanized Honey Bees can chase a victim for over a quarter of a mile.
- Cover your eyes and your face, if possible to help avoid stings to these sensitive areas.
- Remove the stinger as soon as possible by scraping, rather than pulling. Do not squeeze the stinger! Most venom is released within the first minute of being stung.
- Wash all stung areas with soap and water to prevent infection.
- Apply ice to the area to relieve any pain, and contact a doctor or medical professional if breathing is difficult, or if you have been stung numerous times.

General Precautions

"Bee-proof" your home by filling in potential nesting sites such as tree cavities and holes in outside walls. Put screens on the tops of rain spouts and over water meter boxes in the ground. Remove piles of trash and junk from around your house and yard.

Make a “Bee Patrol” around your home once or twice a week during the swarming season usually in the spring or fall. Persistent buzzing may mean a hive or swarm is nearby.

If you find a bee colony or hive, do not disturb it! Keep all people and pets away from it. Call a professional exterminator to handle the problem.

*Document available in an alternate format upon request

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Department Web Site – www.rivcoeh.org