

Africanized Honey Bees

Africanized honey bees are a more temperamental relative of the common garden honey bee, known as the European honey bee. They have sometimes been called “killer bees” and they certainly are not that, but they will defend their hive more rapidly than European honey bees, and usually sting in greater numbers.

The entire county, from the desert to the coast, is considered colonized by Africanized honey bees. The possibility of a bee sting is greater in the spring and fall.

Bees nest in cavities such as holes in the ground, hollow trees, discarded tires, or water meter boxes.

Treat honey bee colonies as you would any other venomous creature, such as a snake or a scorpion. Be alert and stay away! If you can avoid disturbing them in any way, they usually will not sting.

Wear Appropriate Clothing

- When hiking, wear light-colored clothing
- Wear white socks; honey bees are known to sting the ankles of people wearing dark socks
- Always wear full-length pants when hiking and long-sleeved shirts if possible
- Avoid wearing shiny jewelry and leather, which attract bees
- Avoid wearing perfumes or scents

Avoid excessive motion when near a colony

- Don't swat at bees.
- Do not panic if you spot a bees' nest, just move away slowly and deliberately
- Avoid operating machinery (mowers, line-trimmers or chain saws) near nests
- If you are attacked by several bees, the best strategy is to run to shelter as quickly as possible

If you are stung

- Remove stingers as soon as possible. Scrape stingers off the skin with a fingernail or credit card. Do not use fingers or tweezers – this forces toxins into the victim's body
- If you have been stung more than 15 times, or are having symptoms other than swelling and local pain, get medical attention immediately.

Pet safety

- When hiking, it is best to keep your dog on a leash or under close control
- A large animal bounding through the brush may disturb a colony and be attacked
- Animals receive numerous stings because they cannot escape the bees
- Be careful not to tie or pen animals near honey bee hives. Even the mild-mannered European honey bee has been known to attack animals tied near its hives
- If your animals or pets are being stung, try to release them without endangering yourself