

Georgia Dept Of Ag Offers Good Advice Regarding African Honey Bees

Africanized honeybees (AHB) – sometimes called “killer bees” – became established in Texas in 1990 and have spread to other states, now including Georgia.

The Africanized honeybee is related to our state’s familiar honeybee (the European honeybee) that produces honey and pollinates our crops. The two types of bees look the same and their behavior is similar in some respects. Each bee can sting only once, and there is no difference between Africanized honeybee venom and that of a European honeybee. However, Africanized honeybees are less predictable and more aggressive than European honeybees. They are more likely to defend a greater area around their nest, respond faster and in greater numbers than European honeybees.

In other words, you’re more likely to get stung around Africanized honeybees than European ones, but learning about AHB and taking certain precautions can lower your risk of being stung.

Tips to remember:

Africanized Honeybees

- Are very defensive of their nest
- Respond quickly and sting in large numbers
- Can sense a threat from people or animals 50 feet or more from nest
- Sense vibrations from power equipment 100 feet or more from nest
- Will pursue an enemy $\frac{1}{4}$ mile or more
- Swarm frequently to establish new nests
- Nest in small cavities and sheltered areas

Nest sites include empty boxes, cans, buckets, or other containers; old tires; infrequently used vehicles; lumber piles; holes and cavities in fences, trees, or the ground; sheds, garages, and other outbuildings; and low decks or spaces under buildings.

General Precautions

- Be careful wherever bees may be found.
- Listen for buzzing indicating a nest or swarm of bees.
- Use care when entering sheds or outbuildings where bees may nest.
- Examine work area before using lawn mowers, weed cutters, and other power equipment.
- Examine areas before tying up or penning pets or livestock.
- Be alert when participating in all outdoor sports and activities.
- Don’t disturb a nest or swarm – contact a pest control company or your local Cooperative Extension office.
- Teach children to respect **all** bees.
- Check with a doctor about bee sting kits and procedures if sensitive to bee stings.
- Remove possible nest sites around home, and seal openings larger than 1/8” in

walls and around chimneys and plumbing.

As a general rule, stay away from **all** honeybee swarms and colonies. If you encounter bees, get away quickly. If you get stung, try to protect your face and eyes as much as possible and run away from the area. Take shelter in a car or building. Hiding in water or thick brush does **not** offer enough protection. Do not stand and swat at the bees; this will only cause them to sting.

What to Do if Stung

- First, go quickly to a safe area.
- Scrape – do not pull – stingers from skin as soon as possible. The stinger pumps out most of the venom during the first minute. Pulling the stinger out will likely cause more venom to be injected into the skin.
- Wash sting area with soap and water like any other wound.
- Apply ice pack for a few minutes to relieve pain and swelling.
- Seek medical attention if breathing is troubled, if stung numerous times, or if allergic to bee stings.

Don't Forget!

Hives of European honeybees managed by beekeepers play an important part in our lives. These bees are necessary for the pollination of many crops. One-third of our diet relies on honeybee pollination.

If European honeybees were eliminated in an area, Africanized honeybees would quickly fill the gap.

Finally, people can coexist with the Africanized honeybee by learning about the bee and its habits, supporting beekeeping efforts, and taking a few precautions.