



# Africanized Honeybee

A fact sheet by the Kansas Department of Agriculture  
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## Honeybees are Important

Most honeybees in Kansas are descended from the European variety, and they are extremely beneficial. They pollinate fruit, vegetable, flower and seed crops, as well as forage crops like alfalfa and clover. They also produce honey, wax and other products.

One-third of our diet comes from crops pollinated by honeybees. Each year, honeybees add more than \$10 billion to the value of more than 90 crops grown in the United States.

## What are Africanized honeybees?

Africanized honeybees are the same species as the European honeybee used to produce honey and pollinate crops, but a different subspecies. They are called Africanized honeybees because they are thought to be the result of interbreeding between European bees and bees from Africa inadvertently released in Brazil in the 1950s. Recent research indicates the African traits are more dominant, so the bees are not likely to become more gentle from interbreeding with other subspecies.

## Why should I be concerned about the Africanized honeybee?

The Africanized honeybee can be extremely aggressive when defending its colony. At any perceived threat, the Africanized honeybee can swarm out of the colony and attack. A person walking within 50 feet of a colony can trigger an attack. Operating power tools or lawn equipment as far as 100 feet from a hive can trigger an attack. It's not unheard of for a swarm of Africanized honeybees to chase a victim up to a half mile.

## Are Africanized honeybees the "killer bees" I've seen on the news and in movies?

Yes and no. The two names do refer to the same bee, but the term "killer bee" is a name Hollywood made famous. However, because of their extremely aggressive nature, a swarm of Africanized honeybees is likely to deliver more stings than a swarm of European honeybees.

## Is one sting from an Africanized honeybee deadly?

No. One sting is no more or less painful or dangerous than a sting from any other honeybee. The venom from the two types of honeybees is almost identical, but Africanized honeybees sting in greater numbers with less provocation than the European honeybees we are used to in the United States.

## How many times can an Africanized honeybee sting?

Like all honeybees, the Africanized honeybee can sting only once. They leave the stinger in the wound with a tiny venom sac attached, and they die shortly after delivering a sting.

## Are Africanized honeybees in Kansas?

Under normal conditions, Africanized honeybees move northward about 100 miles to 300 miles a year. They have spread throughout most of Mexico, southern Texas, New Mexico, Arizona, California, Nevada, Arkansas and Oklahoma. They have been detected two counties south of Kansas in Oklahoma. They could arrive in Kansas as early as 2006.

## Will I recognize Africanized honeybees if they come to my area?

If you see honeybees now, you will probably see Africanized honeybees if they move into your area. The common sighting is to see a swarm of bees as they look for a new home. However, it is impossible for the average person to distinguish an Africanized honeybee from a European honeybee.

Africanized honeybees are less discriminating when it comes to nesting sites. They build nests in the ground, in cavities in trees or buildings, under bridges, and in utility boxes, if they can find a hole through which to enter.

## Can I make my property bee proof?

You can seal all cracks and holes larger than one-eighth inch that lead into a wall void, attic or subarea. You can use stucco patch, caulking or screen. Most vent screens are a one-quarter inch mesh, but you can purchase one-eighth

inch mesh hardware cloth and cut it to fit existing vent screens. You also should remove junk piles, upturned pots, old bee equipment, or any item that could offer a sheltered home for bees.

## What should I do if I think I've found Africanized honeybees in my area?

If you see a large number of bees in a given area, see bees swarming, or hear loud buzzing coming from an enclosed area, DO NOT approach the bees or attempt to destroy the colony yourself.

What you can DO is call:

- the **Kansas Department of Agriculture** at (785) 862-2180, or
- your county's K-State Research and Extension office.

## What should I do if I'm attacked by a swarm of bees?

- Run away as fast as possible. Get into a building or vehicle if you can. Do not try to hide in water or thick brush.
- Try to cover your face and head as you run. Stings to the head and face pose the greatest danger. Use a towel or shirt to protect yourself.
- Scrape (do not pull) stingers from skin as soon as possible.
- Wash stung areas with soap and water, and apply a cold compress to reduce pain and swelling.
- Seek medical attention if you feel sick, breathing is difficult, you are having an allergic reaction, or if you have been stung many times.
- **If the situation is life-threatening, call 911.**

This fact sheet was prepared by the **Kansas Department of Agriculture's Plant Protection and Weed Control Program, Forbes Field, Building 282, P.O. Box 19282, Topeka, KS 66619-0282, (785) 862-2180.** Visit us on the web at [www.ksda.gov](http://www.ksda.gov).