Miami-Dade Fire Rescue ~ Venom Response Bureau

*Presents*

# "Bee" Safe

## PROTECT YOURSELF, YOUR FAMILY, HOME AND PROPERTY FROM BEES

### AFRICANIZED AND EUROPEAN HONEY BEES

Africanized bees are becoming well established in the wild population of honey bees in Florida. The Africanized bee appears identical to European honey bee. Neither species is native to the United States.

#### SIMILARITIES

- They look the same.
- They protect their nests from predators by stinging.
- Each individual bee can sting only once and then dies.
- They have the same venom, in the same quantity.
- They pollinate flowers and produce honey and wax.

#### AFRICANIZED BEES

- Respond more quickly to disturbances by people and animals within 50 feet of the nest.
- Sense and respond to vibrations from power equipment within 100 feet of their nest.
- Sting in larger numbers.
- Will chase an enemy up to a $\frac{1}{4}$ mile or more.
- Have a higher rate of reproduction (swarm more frequently).
- Nest is smaller cavities and sometimes underground (e.g. water meters and animal burrows).

### POTENTIAL NESTING SITES

Bees will choose a nesting site in many places where people may disturb them. Nesting cavities may include: buckets, cans, empty boxes, old tires, BBQ grills, or any container ranging in volume from as little as 2 to 10 gallons or more. Bees may also choose to nest within rarely used vehicles, lumber piles, holes and cavities in fences, trees and the ground, in sheds, garages, and other outbuildings, between walls or in the open, low decks or crawl spaces under buildings. **REMOVE OR BLOCK POTENTIAL NEST SITES FROM YOUR PROPERTY!**

*****CALL AN EXTERMINATOR*** if you find bees on your property. DO NOT ATTEMPT TO GET RID OF THE BEES YOURSELF!**

### GENERAL PRECAUTIONS

- Have a **BEE SAFETY PLAN** in place for your family.
- **TEACH CHILDREN** to be cautious and respectful of all bees.
- **WATCH** for bees when outdoors.
- **LISTEN FOR BUZZING** and look for bees entering or leaving the same area, this could indicate a nest or swarm of bees.
- **CAREFULLY ENTER** sheds and outbuildings where bees may nest.
- **EXAMINE WORK AREAS** prior to using noisy power equipment such as lawn mowers, weed cutters, and chain saws.
- **CHECK ANIMAL AREAS** for bees before tying up or penning pets and livestock.
- If you know you to are allergic to bee stings ask your doctor about a sting kit
- **NEVER DISTURB a swarm or colony of bees- contact a pest control company or your Local Cooperative Extension Agent. In Miami Dade : 305-248-3311, web: http://miami-dade.ifas.ufl.edu/**

## BEE PROOFING YOUR BUILDING AND YARD

- **REMOVE** potential nesting sites.
- **INSPECT** outside walls and eves of your house and other buildings.
- **SEAL** openings greater than 1/8-inch in walls, around chimneys, plumbing, and other openings.
- **INSTALL SCREENS** (1/8-inch hardware cloth) over rainspouts, vents, cavities of trees and fences posts, water meter/utility boxes, etc.
- **PERFORM YEAR-ROUND CHECKS for bee activity** around your house and yard (at least once a week during the warm months!)

## WHAT TO DO IF YOU FIND BEES ON YOUR PROPERTY

- **STAY AWAY** from all honey bee swarms and colonies.
- If you happen to encounter bees **RETREAT FROM THE AREA** as quickly and quietly as possible.
- While running away **PROTECT YOUR FACE AND EYES** as much as possible.
- **TAKE SHELTER** in an enclosed area such as a car, house or building.
- **CALL** a local bee keeper, pest control company or cooperative extension agent. In Miami Dade : 305-248-3311, web: http://miami-dade.ifas.ufl.edu/)
- **DO NOT TRY TO HIDE IN WATER OR THICK BRUSH.**
- **DO NOT STAND STILL AND SWAT AT BEES**; rapid movements will further agitate the bees.

## WHAT TO DO IF YOU ARE STUNG

1. **GET AWAY** from the bees as quickly as possible, seek shelter in an enclosed area
2. **PULL OR SCRAPE STINGERS** from the skin as soon as possible. Most venom is released in the first minute.
3. **WASH STUNG AREAS WITH SOAP AND WATER** like any other wound to prevent infection.
4. **APPLY ICE** to relieve pain and swelling.
5. **SEEK MEDICAL ATTENTION** if breathing is difficult, if stung many times, or if you are allergic to bee stings.

## MINIMIZING STINGS

1. **RUN AWAY** in a **STRAIGHT LINE** as fast as you can **TO THE NEAREST SHELTER**; car with closed doors and windows, house, building, etc. you will bring some bees with you, but the numbers will be fewer inside than if you stayed outside.
2. **COVER YOURSELF, ESPECIALLY YOUR FACE, WITH WHATEVER IS AVAILABLE**, this will help protect you from the bees.
3. Although it may be tempting, **DO NOT SEEK SHELTER IN WATER!** Africanized bees are extremely persistent. Every time you come up for air they will attempt to sting you. This will reinforce their defensive behavior. You could be repeatedly stung and trapped in the water for a very long time.
4. If you must enter an area you suspect has bees, then **PLAN FOR YOUR ESCAPE AND WEAR PROTECTIVE CLOTHING**, including a mosquito net to protect your head.
5. Any number of stings can be dangerous. **SEEK MEDICAL CARE IF YOU ARE STUNG BY MANY BEES.** Get a sting kit from your doctor if you are allergic to bee venom, a single sting can be fatal if you have a severe reaction!
6. The lethal dose of bee venom is highly variable, ranging from 1 to 1000's of stings. A toxic dose is estimated around 5 to 10 stings per pound of body weight. People with weakened immune systems, children, and small adults are at greater risk. About 1,000 stings will place a healthy 150lb adult at risk of death. An average size colony, which is on the defensive, easily can produce this number of stings!