

Africanized Honey Bees and Your Pets and Livestock

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Africanized honey bees (the so-called “killer bees”) arrived in Arkansas in 2005. Some colonies of Africanized honey bees defend their nests with more vigor and in greater numbers than the common European honey bee. When bees defend their colonies, they target furry and dark-colored objects that resemble their natural enemies: bears and skunks. Therefore, your pets are likely to be stung when bees are disturbed. Animals that are penned or tied up near honey bees are in special peril.



- **Do not pen, tie or tether animals near known bee hives or nests.** Keep animals away from apiaries and bee nests. Bees may seem docile at first, but don't take chances.



- **Do not disturb or tease bees EVER, and do not try to remove bees yourself.** Do not shoot at, throw rocks at or pour gasoline on bee nests. This will only arouse the bees. Also, do not attempt to control them with aerosol pesticides.
- **Do keep pets and children indoors when using weed eaters, hedge clippers, tractors, power mowers, chain saws, etc.** Honey bees are sensitive to odors, such as the smell of cut grass, and to loud vibrations. Attacks frequently occur when a person is mowing the lawn or pruning shrubs and trees and inadvertently strikes a bee nest.
- **Do keep dogs under control when hiking.** A dog bounding through the brush is more likely to disturb bees than one following quietly at your heels.

Do's and Don'ts

- **Do look regularly for bee colonies around your property.** Honey bees nest in a wide variety of locations. They may nest in such diverse sites as animal burrows in the ground, water meter boxes or in overturned flower pots. Sometimes honey bees may nest in the open in trees or shrubs. Look for active bees, and listen for a buzzing or humming sound in the ground, in trees and shrubs or in block walls. If you find a colony of bees, consult your local Cooperative Extension Office or the Arkansas State Plant Board (501-225-1598) directly for instructions.

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- Do stay alert when horseback riding through brush or under low hanging branches where bees might nest.



What to Do if Your Animal Is Involved in a Serious Stinging Accident

Try to get the animal away from the bees **WITHOUT ENDANGERING YOURSELF**. Call your dog inside your house or car, or release the animal **IF IT WILL NOT HARM THE ANIMAL OR OTHERS NEARBY**. Do not attempt to approach a person or an animal being stung without some sort of protection (such as a beekeeper's suit) because the bees are likely to attack you as well. If you approach an animal that is being stung, remember that an injured animal may bite or attack unexpectedly. If you release penned livestock, be aware that an unrestrained animal may run into the road and be hit by a car or may run away. And if the animal runs to you with aroused bees following it, you are likely to be stung too.

If possible, douse the animal with a shower of soapy water which will kill any bees clinging to it. A mild solution of liquid dish detergent in water

(approximately 1/2 cup soap per gallon of water) will immobilize honey bees and kill them within 60 seconds.

Covering the animal with a heavy blanket during a serious stinging incident may also discourage the bees.

Once the animal is away from bees, look for stingers. When a honey bee stings, it loses its venom sac and stinger. The honey bee dies after it stings, but the stinger may continue to inject venom for up to a minute or until the stinger is removed. If you can see stingers on the animal, remove them by scraping them out with a credit card, knife or fingernail. Do not pull them out with tweezers or fingers because you will squeeze more venom into the animal.



If an animal has sustained numerous stings, you may want to consult your veterinarian. The number of stings an animal can survive depends on its body weight, the amount of venom it received and whether or not it is allergic to bee venom. As with humans, even one sting may be dangerous if the animal is allergic.

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