

Preparing Schools for Africanized Honey Bees

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Africanized honey bees have arrived in Arkansas. Schools may want to take a few precautions to help protect students. The following are some guidelines for planning for Africanized honey bee safety on and around campus.

1. Designate a school monitor to walk around school grounds daily to look for Africanized honey bee colonies or swarms. Make sure the monitor is trained to recognize honey bees and is properly equipped (has a bee veil available).

The monitor should look for sites that may be attractive to bees for nesting and report to maintenance to remove, cover or repair them. The monitor should remember that honey bees may nest in a variety of sites, ranging from animal burrows in the ground, to hollows in block walls, to overturned flower pots. Utility boxes, water or irrigation valve boxes, playground equipment and drainage pipes are also possibilities. Private property around the school may need to be examined as well, particularly lots or vacant buildings that may be high traffic areas for students arriving at or leaving school.

Keep holes in the ground filled. Cover water valve boxes, rain spouts, etc., with #7 mesh or finer screen. Fill or caulk holes that may give bees access to an internal cavity. Bees

may enter a hole as small as a pencil eraser (3/16 inch in diameter).

2. If a honey bee swarm or colony is found, the monitor should notify all teachers to keep everyone away from the area. Arrange to have swarms or colonies removed and/or destroyed immediately, even if they haven't been a problem in the past. School administrators should contact the local Cooperative Extension Office or the Arkansas State Plant Board (501-225-1598) directly for instructions. Some monitors may be able to remove swarms if properly trained.

Only licensed professional pest control operators or beekeepers who have received Africanized honey bee training from the Arkansas State Plant Board should try to remove an established colony. Do not allow untrained individuals to spray the colony with pesticides or dump kerosene on the bees. This will only arouse the bees and make them defensive.

Request that the bees be removed after school hours.

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3. Plan to use noisy equipment, such as lawn mowers, when students are indoors or away from campus, if possible.

Bees are alarmed by vibrations or loud noises produced by equipment such as weed eaters, chainsaws or electric generators. Honey bees may also be disturbed by strong odors, such as the odor of newly mown grass. Thus, bees are often aroused during landscape maintenance operations.

4. Establish a plan of action for a stinging incident.

Teach students to leave bees alone. If a bee nest is found, do not throw rocks at or otherwise disturb it. If students accidentally arouse an Africanized honey bee colony while at school, they should know what to do.

Encourage the students to run indoors if stung. A few bees will follow them indoors. However, if they run to a well-lit area, the bees will tend to become confused and fly to windows.

Call 911 or local emergency service personnel. They have been trained to respond to Africanized honey bee emergencies.

- Designate an area away from classrooms (preferably a large, well-lit room with high ceilings, such as the cafeteria or gym) where students should go. Have a trained person available there or nearby with a vacuum

cleaner hose on hand to immediately remove any bees that remain. If no vacuum is available, bees may be killed with a soap and water solution (3 to 6 percent soap) in a spray bottle. The nurse should also be nearby to take care of stinging victims.

- Teachers should be trained in the proper method of removing stingers. Honey bees leave stingers in the skin. This kills the honey bee so it can't sting again, but it also means that venom continues to be pumped into the wound for a short time. Do not pull stingers out with tweezers or fingers, because it will squeeze more venom into the wound. Instead, scrape them out using a fingernail, the edge of a credit card, a dull knife blade or other straight-edged object.

5. Make sure the school nurse is ready.

The school nurse should know the proper way to remove bee stingers and should train others. Because even one bee sting may be fatal if the victim is allergic, the nurse should also know the signs of allergic reactions. If possible have an anaphylactic kit, bee suit and bee veil available for emergencies.

6. Educate the students and faculty about what is being done. Reassure them that most people will never encounter Africanized honey bees and that those who do are rarely seriously injured. Have "bee drills" so students know where to go and what to do.

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