
KILLER BEES

What are 'killer' bees?

I was stung by a killer bee. Should I go to the hospital?

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What are 'killer' bees?

"Killer bees" are also known as Africanized honeybees. These are honeybees that were introduced to Brazil and have migrated over recent decades through Central America and Mexico and into the southern United States. Essentially all honeybee populations in Arizona are now 'Africanized'. The main characteristic that distinguishes these honeybees from domestic (European) honeybees is aggressive, defensive behavior. Killer bees are more likely to swarm and sting humans in large numbers with little provocation, making them very dangerous.

I was stung by a killer bee. Should I go to the hospital?

A single sting from an Africanized honeybee is no more dangerous than that from any other bee. The most common expected reaction is pain and swelling at the sting site. Most do not require immediate medical attention. People with a history of severe allergy to bee stings are at risk of developing a life-threatening reaction to a single sting, as they might with a sting by a domestic honeybee. If you are uncertain of whether to seek medical attention, call your physician or a local Poison Control Center (1-800-222-1222) for advice.

What makes Africanized honeybees so dangerous?

While their venom is not significantly different from that of domestic honeybees, Africanized honeybees are much more likely to swarm and attack in large numbers. The cumulative amount of venom injected from numerous stings is what causes more severe toxicity. Large doses of venom (usually resulting from more than 50-100 stings) may produce nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, and dangerous effects on the blood, muscle, liver and kidneys. Children, elderly, and people with other serious medical conditions are more likely to develop some of these complications.

What should I do if I'm stung or swarmed?

Attempt to isolate yourself from the swarm of bees by going inside a building or car. Avoid jumping in water to escape the bees because they will wait and attack when you emerge. If you have suffered numerous stings and have any symptoms, such as nausea and vomiting or difficulty breathing, call 911 if necessary and seek medical care immediately. Call your local Poison Control Center (1-800-222-1222) for treatment recommendations.

How do I avoid being attacked by killer bees?

When doing outdoor activities such as yard work, maintenance, or even pest extermination, watch & listen for evidence of a hive. Notify a bee removal expert if you become aware of a hive but do not disturb the hive yourself. Be on the alert when hiking in mountain preserves or parks and closely monitor pets and children playing outside.

What should I do if I find a hive?

Warn other people to avoid the hive and contact a local pest control company to remove the hive. Spraying water or throwing rocks at the hive is dangerous and is discouraged.