Africanized honeybees nesting sites and the use of swarm traps

The Africanized honeybee has been living in Arizona since the 1990s. The bees have adapted to difficult environmental conditions including extreme seasonal heat, drought, and relatively cool winters. To achieve this, they have colonized urban areas where water is more abundant. They frequently invade man-made shelters seeking protection from extreme ambient temperatures, and often use flower resources supported by irrigation.




Examples of cavities used by Africanized bees in Arizona, from left to right, dead saguaro cactus, rock wall, hollow space inside a fence wall, inside of a discarded tire at a ranch.




Removal of AHB colonies can be challenging based on their temperament and the location they have chosen to make a nest. From left to right, removal of bees from a cell phone tower, and removal of a colony found underground in a water meter in a residential area.




Discarded household items also provide suitable nesting sites for bees. From left to right a bed frame, a chest of drawers, inside a large clay pot, and under a cushion in an old chair.

UH Honeybee Project

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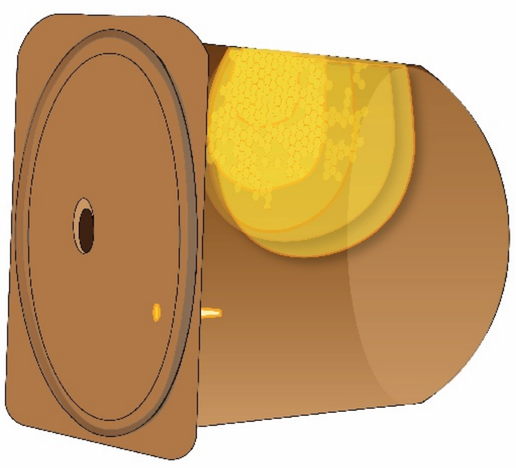
Dr. Steve Thoenes responds to a call about an aggressive bee infestation in urban Phoenix, AZ.

He quickly focuses on the only side of the building with a sliver of shade as a possible site for the bee nest, and he was correct.

In extreme climatic conditions such as in the Arizona desert, the bees will seek out some form of insulation from the environment including nesting behind insulation foam in houses or simply finding the area with more shade.

Cardboard swarm trap with removable lid



Swarm trap with pheromone and comb

Young swarm inside a swarm trap

Removing Africanized bees, or any large well-established colony, from a dwelling is disruptive, costly, and can be dangerous. Swarm traps, whether made of carboard or wood, can be baited with pheromones to attract swarms and prevent infestations in buildings. If the traps are checked regularly, it is possible to detect and remove a colony when it is still small and less aggressive. Capturing, re-homing, and re-queening these feral bees is possible if it is done with caution. Once the aggressive queens have been replaced the resulting colonies can be used for honey production or pollination.

Photos by Dr. Steve Thoenes and Dr. Ethel M Villalobos