

# African Honey Bee FAQ

## 1) What kinds of honey bees do we have in Utah?

There are many different kinds of wasps, hornets, biting flies, bumble bees, solitary bees, and other insects which may be mistaken for honey bees. Honey bees are one of the 30,000 plus species of bees in the world. Utah has the gentle, managed European Honey Bee (EHB) which produces honey and pollinates billions of dollars worth of crops in Utah and the United States. Utah also has a growing population of the gentle European honey bee's cousin, the introduced, invasive Africanized Honey Bee (AHB).

## 2) If I have bees in my yard/house what should I do?

Most "bees", wasps, hornets, mud daubers, etc. are non-aggressive unless disturbed. The AHB can be defensive and aggressive when it feels it's nest, home, resources are in danger, **much like any homeowner**. If the homeowner is in doubt or is challenged by unidentified stinging insects they should call a licensed Pest Control Operator (PCO) for eradication and removal. **The Department can provide names of PCO's in your area if needed.**

## 3) There is a swarm of bees hanging in one of my trees, what should I do?

All honey bees reproduce, in one way, by sending out a swarm which is a mass of individual bees with a reproductive queen to seek out a new home. Regardless if these are gentle EHB or defensive AHB they generally will be non-aggressive. Until the AHB establishes a home and has a reason to protect that home, they will be non-aggressive, **generally**. Once the swarm is established and starts building beeswax comb, they will defend this home vigorously.

## 4) Why doesn't the state or your office remove bees?

We are a regulatory agency charged with helping Registered Utah Beekeepers keep their vital, gentle colonies of EHB healthy from pests, predators, and diseases for the benefit of Utah's agriculture. We are not trained PCO's and have neither the expertise, **manpower**, nor equipment to eradicate or remove stinging insects. We are prepared to assist in a stinging incident if called upon to do so.

## 4(a) Why can't I get a beekeeper to remove these bees instead of killing them if they are so important?

Because beekeepers are working their own EHB colonies, it is not economically feasible for them to remove these bees, nor do they want liability or the possibility of introducing possible Africanized bees to their gentle managed EHB colonies.

## 5) If you give me names of pest control companies, are they recommended by the state?

**As a courtesy**, we maintain a list of PCO's who have indicated that they are willing to accept jobs to eradicate stinging insects. This is not a state recommendation, simply a list of interested parties (PCO's).

## 6) Why do the bees in my house have to be destroyed instead of just removed?

With the growing presence of AHB in Utah, any bees in the wild, not associated with a Registered Utah Beekeeper is a potential AHB problem. For liability, public health, and safety reasons these should be considered for eradication.

## 7) What do I do if bees attack me?

Leave the area immediately. Seek shelter in a sealed car, truck, or similar vehicle, in a building, home, etc. Even if these are stinging insects that accompany you into this area it is better than being exposed to the full force of the aggressive colony. If this action is not possible, leave, run as fast as possible from the area until a minimum distance of ¼ mile (4 football fields) is put between you and the aggressive colony.

**8) How do I know if the insects I see are bees?**

The average citizen will not know. If there are 100's or 1000's of insects attempting to drive you away by stinging see #7.

**9) Why are African bees called “killer” bees?**

AHB has been called killer bees for years by the media for sensationalism. AHB has been implicated in 14 fatalities in the US since approximately 1990. To put this in perspective, we have deaths in the Southeast every year from fire ants, venomous snakes, and there are approximately 350 deaths each year from motorists colliding with deer on our roads. Awareness of your environment and speedy calls to PCO's is the goal to stop interaction between AHB and people.

**10) I see some bee boxes on a property next to mine, are they allowed to be there?**

Those boxes may be the colonies of gentle European Honey Bee colonies maintained by Registered Utah Beekeepers. We do not regulate colony locations in Utah. These colonies of gentle EHB are the first line of defense against AHB as they interbreed with AHB and dilute their aggressiveness. Utah beekeepers must be appreciated and embraced as one of the answers to the spread of AHB.

**11) Why are bees important to Utah agriculture?**

European Honey Bees maintained by Registered Utah Beekeepers are responsible for millions of dollars in agricultural products each year in the state. Without honey bees and their pollination efforts, Utah agriculture and US production of fruits, vegetables, and berries would be severely restricted resulting in huge losses for growers and the loss or dramatic rise of food prices for consumers.

**11(a) Is this why some pest control companies say it is against the law to kill honey bees?**

Although Utah's stance is that you should not kill beneficial insects, it is not against the law to do so. The Department realizes that sometimes because of safety reasons feral (wild) colonies have to be depopulated whether they are AHB or the gentler EHB.

**12) What is the state doing to help the honey bee industry?**

We are partnering with the Utah Beekeepers Association and other groups to bring the message of how important the Honey Bee Industry is to Utah. We will distribute Best Management Practices to all registered Utah beekeepers work together for a stronger, safer, Honey Bee Industry in Utah.

**13) What is the state doing to protect the public for AHBs?**

UDAF will continue to monitor AHB activity using traps, eliminate aggressive colonies, and educate the public about AHB risks. First Responders, Emergency Services, and others have developed plans and strategies to protect the public and the Apiary Industry in Utah.

For more information you can access the Utah Department of Food and Agriculture website at:

<http://ag.utah.gov/>

This site includes information about AHB and pest controllers licensed to remove them.

State Dept Ag & Food for Washington County: (435) 634-5708

State Dept Ag & Food for Utah: (801) 538-7123