

Evade Bee Stings

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How to avoid getting stung by a honey bee? There are only three reasons bees give their lives just to sting you: threaten her hive, make her mad, or get in her way. This article will address those three motives, but first let's discuss what to do if stung.

Note: When in doubt seek medical help.

Without getting into too many gory details about a bee's backside, a honey bee's stinger is barbed (little sharp edges), hollow and filled with venom. Most other bees have smooth stingers and to debunk a myth, can sting numerous times. Armed with that insight, a barbed stinger sticks into your skin, so the last thing you want to do is grab the stinger with teeth, tweezers or fingernails, because more venom will be injected by squeezing the hollow stinger. Instead, take a credit card, dull knife and gently scrape the stinger out. Ice or cold water can relieve pain. The open wound should be treated with some antiseptic to help relieve itching. It's gonna itch. The effects of the sting should not last more than 3 days.



Now, let's figure out how not to get stung. First, stay away from her hive. If you approach a hive, you'll probably get a warning fly-by. Unlike most solitary bees like bumble or mason, honey bees have a colony to defend and actually stand guard on the landing platform of their hives. These guard bees fly-out and will either bump the face or head area as a warning. Their instinct is to attack the face, not because they don't like the way you look, but because it is most effective in deterring would-be honey thefts (think bears). Once stung, a pheromone is left behind and that alerts the other bees as to who's the enemy. So, if bumped or stung near a hive, run away or all her friends might seek you out and avenge their fallen sister.

Second, if going out in nature leave perfume or sweet drinks for another day. Bees are attracted to nice smells such as hair conditioner, perfume, or they want a sip of a sugary drink. Few folks like bees flying around them and they make the mistake of swatting at the bee. This annoys the bee and well, it's not nice to annoy Mother Nature...especially when she has a stinger. Next thing you know, you are doing the get-away-bee dance and you get stung.

Finally, when flowers are in bloom, stop, look and listen. Otherwise you might step between the bees and food. Bees leave their hive like a shot, clocking out at 15 MPH, and return loaded with nectar or pollen. They are flying so fast and focused they simply run into you.

There you have it, three steps to stay safe around our friends the honey bee.

To learn more about our Texas bees, attend "ABCs of Bees" February 11 0900 Palo Pinto Extension Office.

Thanks to Whispers from the Bee for this amazing time-lapse photo of bees

For more information contact: Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service
940-659-1228 <http://palopinto.agrilife.org>



flying to and from their hives! Greenpeace, New Zealand.



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