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NEWS RELEASE FROM THE OFFICE OF:

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Bees have been very active this spring in East Texas. We need to remember that Africanized Honey Bees were located in Gregg and Harrison counties several years ago.

The Africanized Honey Bee, popularly known as the "killer bee" is now considered to be in the majority of the state of Texas. This insect, which has been migrating from South America since the 1950's, looks just like a domestic honeybee, but it is not nearly as good natured. In fact, it has a bit of a quick temper.

The domestic bee has lived in harmony with human beings for hundreds of years. It has been bred for gentleness and good honey production.

By contrast, the Africanized bee is a "wild" bee that is not comfortable being around people or animals. Any colony of bees will defend its hive, but Africanized bees do so with gusto. These bees are more likely to sense a threat at greater distances, become more upset with less reason, and sting in much greater numbers.

The Africanized bee's "killer" reputation is exaggerated, but it does have some basis in fact. In isolated instances, people and animals have been stung to death. Most often, the person who died was not able to get away from the bees quickly. Animal losses have occurred for the same reasons. Pets and livestock were tied up or penned when they encountered the bees.

However, Africanized bees do not roam in giant swarms looking for victims to attack. These bees react defensively only when they feel threatened.

The Africanized bees defend its nest far more intensively than does the European honey bee. The AHB responds quickly to disturbances by people and animals 50 feet or more from the nest, and can sense vibrations from power equipment 100 feet or more from the nest. AHB will chase an enemy up to a quarter mile or more.

We must hold a healthy respect for all bee colonies and swarms as potentially populated by over-defensive Africanized Honey Bees. Any wild swarms found near

residences or close to domestic animals should be removed. In addition, we should do a bee inspection frequently around are homes and barns.

Bees will choose a nesting site many places where people may disturb them. Nesting cavities may include: buckets, cans, empty boxes, old tires, or any container ranging in volume from as little as 2 to 10 gallons and more. Bees will also choose infrequently used vehicles, lumber piles, holes and cavities in fences, trees, and the ground, in sheds, garages, and other outbuildings between walls or in the open, low decks or spaces under buildings.

If you find a swarm of bees on your property, stay away from the area and call a local bee keeper or pest control company for assistance. If you do get stung, pull or scrape the stingers from the skin as soon as possible. Most of the venom is released within 1 minute. Wash the stung area with soap and water to prevent infection. Apply ice to relieve pain and swelling. Seek medical attention if breathing is difficult, if stung many times or if allergic to bee stings.

Additional information on bees is available on the Texas AgriLife Extension Service web site at <http://honeybee.tamu.edu/>

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