

## **Are Honey Bees a significant risk due to stings?**

### **Honeybees rarely sting anyone:**

**According to Colorado State University Extension, most insect stings in Colorado are attributable to yellowjackets and European paper wasps. "Almost all insect stings result from yellowjackets and an insect newly established in the state, the European paper wasp."**

Nuisance Wasp and Bees, W. S. Cranshaw

Entomologist, Professor of Bioagricultural Sciences and Pest Management  
Colorado State University Extension

<http://www.ext.colostate.edu/pubs/insect/05525.html>[1]

**Entomologists at the University of Maryland state that most stings come from yellowjackets, not bees.**

**"MYTH: Bees are the usual offenders.**

**FACT: Most stings come from yellowjackets."**

Bulletin 248 - Common Stinging Insects: Wasps and Bees

N. L. Breisch and B. L. Thorne

University of Maryland, College Park

[http://extension.umd.edu/sites/default/files/\\_images/programs/hgic/Publications/non\\_HGIC\\_FS/EB248.pdf](http://extension.umd.edu/sites/default/files/_images/programs/hgic/Publications/non_HGIC_FS/EB248.pdf)[2]

**Utah State University Extension estimates the percentage of bee stings to be quite low. They credit 90% of stings to Yellowjackets**

**"Bees are often blamed for most stings, but about 90% of all stings are likely caused by yellowjackets."**

Yellowjackets, Hornets and Paper Wasps

Erin Hodgson, Extension Entomology Specialist and Alan Roe, Insect Diagnostician

Utah State University Extension

<http://extension.usu.edu/files/publications/factsheet/yellowjackets-hornets-wasps09.pdf>[3]

**According to the University of Florida, up to 98% of all stings are from yellowjackets.**

**“Yellow jackets can inflict multiple stings, unlike honeybees, which can sting only once. They are commonly mistaken for bees and, according to some estimates, account for nearly 98 percent of all stings.”**

As Yellow Jacket Population Peaks, So Does Danger of Stings

Cindy Spence, Science Writer, University of Florida

Phil Koehler, Endowed Professor of Entomology and Nematology, University of Florida

<http://news.ufl.edu/1999/10/27/yellowjackets/>[4]

**“Bees swarm when a colony becomes too large or overcrowded. The bees produce a new queen, and the old queen takes off with up to half the colony. The new queen and the remainder of the bees stay with the old colony. The swarming bees move away and light on a branch or other object. It’s pretty impressive, to see a big ball of bees. Once the scouting bees find a suitable location to set up a new home, the swarm will move on. When the bees leave the old colony, they engorge themselves with honey for the trip. These bees are usually not aggressive. I’m not saying they won’t sting, they can. It’s just that they are full of honey and looking for a new home, and thus less likely to sting.”**

When the bees swarm.... no cause for alarm

Northwest Missouri Extension News You Can Use, June 2011, page 3

Tim Baker, Northwest Region Horticulture Specialist

University of Missouri Extension Office

<http://extension.missouri.edu/nwregion/hort/news/110519.shtml>[5]

**“Keeping gentle European honeybees will dilute the aggressive behavior common in feral honeybee colonies.”**

Urban Apiculture Institute of the University of Wisconsin Extension

<http://milwaukee.uwex.edu/agriculture/beekeeping/>[6]

**"Honeybee swarms sometimes take up residence in barns, houses, trees, or any other location that they think is a suitable place to establish a new home. Once established, they will become more aggressive, as they start defending the colony. Removal of bees inside a house or other structure is not an easy job. A local beekeeper may be able to help. Call your local Extension Center for advice."**

Tim Baker, Northwest Region Horticulture Specialist  
University of Missouri Extension Office

<http://extension.missouri.edu/nwregion/hort/tips/1206.shtml>[7]

**"A bee will rarely sting when it is away from the colony foraging on pollen, nectar or water."**

<http://www.ars.usda.gov/research/docs.htm?docid=11067&page=8>[8]

**"Beekeepers are the best defense Americans have against Africanized honey bees. Citizens and lawmakers need to understand this. In the fear that accompanies the arrival of Africanized bees, some groups may want to ban beekeeping in their municipalities. Without beekeepers, the density of docile European bees in an area will decrease, leaving that area open to infestation by Africanized bees. It is equivalent to "abandoning territory to the enemy." Only beekeepers have the knowledge and resources to maintain high densities of European bees that can genetically dilute Africanized populations."**

University of Georgia Cooperative Extension Bulletin 1290: Africanized Honey Bees

Keith S. Delaplane, Professor of Entomology University of Georgia  
Cooperative Extension

<http://extension.uga.edu/publications/displayPDF.cfm?number=B1290>[9]

**"Realize that beekeepers are on the front lines of defense—beekeepers are part of the solution, not the problem."**

Africanized "killer" bees: a problem for North Carolina?

David R. Tarpy, Assistant Professor and Extension Apiculturist  
Department of Entomology, North Carolina State University

[http://www.ncagr.gov/plantindustry/plant/apiary/ncahb\\_files/African\\_Bees\\_For\\_Public.ppt](http://www.ncagr.gov/plantindustry/plant/apiary/ncahb_files/African_Bees_For_Public.ppt)[10]

**“Extension offices receive phone calls this time of year from people who have seen bee swarms in their yard, and wonder what to do about it. A true swarm of honeybees is usually not dangerous, as the bees are simply looking for a new home. This represents a great way for beekeepers to obtain bees for their hive. Call your local Extension office, and we will try to locate a beekeeper for you.”**

Tim Baker, Northwest Region Horticulture Specialist

University of Missouri Extension Office

<http://extension.missouri.edu/nwregion/hort/tips/1206.shtml>[11]

The following chart is derived from the United States Center for Disease Control's Wonder database.[http://wonder.cdc.gov/\[12\]](http://wonder.cdc.gov/[12])

### U.S. Deaths per Year

Year	Venomous Insects **	Honey Bees *	Dogs	Lightning	Ice Falls	Bed Falls
1999	43	21.5	25	64	74	400
2000	54	27	26	50	92	450
2001	43	21.5	25	44	87	516
2002	54	27	18	66	74	551
2003	66	33	32	47	103	594
2004	52	26	27	46	99	503
2005	82	41	33	48	91	621
2006	61	30.5	32	47	61	626
2007	54	27	32	47	61	626
2008	49	24.5	27	29	143	737
2009	55	27.5	32	31	123	780
2010	52	26	38	29	106	718
2011	71	35.5	34	24	124	769
2012	59	29.5	34	29	31	787
<b>Mean</b>	56.79	28.39	29.64	42.86	94.43	624.43

\* This is based on an estimated 50% of deaths caused by honeybee stings as opposed to other venomous insects. "Studies of 400 Hymenoptera Sting Deaths in the United States," JH Barnard. This is the highest estimated percentage found in all research studies I have found. Most estimates are under 20% and can be as low as 2%.

The CDC does not break venomous insect stings beyond this general category. Venomous insect stings include all wasps, hornets and bees. In particular, this grouping includes the aggressive yellow jacket and Africanized honey bees. It is estimated that yellow jackets alone are responsible for 40- 98% of these stings. CITATION: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Health Statistics. Compressed Mortality File 1999-2010 on CDC WONDER Online Database, released January 2013. Data are compiled from Compressed Mortality File 1999- 2010 Series 20 No. 2P, 2013. Accessed at <http://wonder.cdc.gov/cmfi-icd10.html>[13] on Apr 22, 2014 1:39:59 PM

\*\* (Bees, Wasps and Hornets) - (ICD-10 X23) (ICD-10 W54) (ICD-10 X33) (ICD-10 W00) (ICD-10 W06)