



**STATE OF MISSISSIPPI
DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE AND COMMERCE**

CINDY HYDE-SMITH
COMMISSIONER

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For Immediate Release

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Africanized Bee Colony Destroyed in Pass Christian

The Mississippi Department of Agriculture and Commerce (MDAC) located and destroyed a colony of Africanized bees at a residence in Pass Christian on October 29, 2012, as a result of a homeowner complaint issued concerning bees at the residence. During the investigation of the complaint, a colony of bees was discovered in the subfloor of the structure. According to the homeowner, the bees had arrived by swarm a few weeks earlier. Domestic European honey bees typically do not swarm this late into the fall season, which prompted MDAC to destroy the colony as a precaution and also collect a sample for analysis.

The sample was sent to the Alabama Department of Agriculture and Industries, Bee Laboratory, for a quick screening test, which resulted in the high probability of Africanized bees. The sample was then sent to the Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services, Bee Laboratory, who confirmed the sample positive for Africanized bees by using the USDA official identification test.

Africanized bees are a hybrid, or mixed breeding, of African and European honey bees. The most important difference in Africanized bees and domestic European honey bees is their behavior. Africanized bees are extremely defensive and will protect their nest or colony more fiercely and in greater numbers when disturbed or threatened. It is difficult to visually distinguish Africanized bees from European honey bees with the naked eye, and only through laboratory testing, can the species be verified.

Africanized bees originate from Africa and were imported into Brazil in 1956 for research where they escaped and have since migrated through South America and Mexico. Africanized bees were first detected in the United States in Texas in 1990 and have since spread to New Mexico, Arizona, California, Nevada, Utah, Oklahoma, Arkansas, Louisiana, Florida, and Georgia.

Coastal ports are major pathways for the introduction of Africanized honey bees. In the past, bee swarms have been intercepted and destroyed by the Department of Homeland Security and USDA on ships and vessels entering the coastal ports of Mississippi. Since 2007, MDAC has deployed and monitored bee swarm traps with no positive interceptions of Africanized bees.

Based on the information available at this time, MDAC believes this is an isolated incident; however, trapping and surveying will continue in the area through the fall and spring. For additional information, contact MDAC's Bureau of Plant Industry at (888) 257-1285.

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