



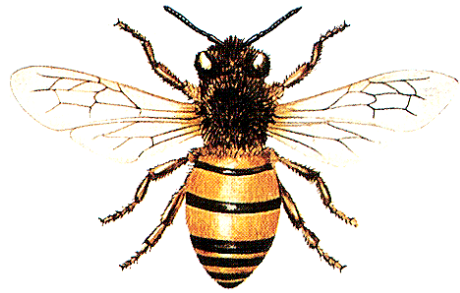
HONEY BEES (*APIS MELLIFERA*)

GENERAL INFORMATION

There are approximately two hundred and fifty species of bee, although only thirty species are of the social order type. One of these is the honey bee. The bee is a member of the vast order known as Hymenoptera, the most intelligent and organised of the insect world.

Honey bees are social insects with a strict cast order from Queen, drone and worker, all having a specific function within the Community.

The bees traffic from the hive to flowers during good flying weather gathering pollen and nectar, using it as a food source for themselves and for the other members of the colony. It is this trafficking from flower to flower that is so beneficial as it pollinates many flowers and trees.



THE QUEEN BEE

There is only one queen bee per hive during most of the year. In appearance she is slightly longer in the body than the worker but has noticeably smaller wings and she possesses a sting. The queen's purpose is solely laying eggs in the cells made by her workers, she never leaves the hive in search of pollen and nectar.

Within the honey bee's strict cast order the queen is of the highest order and is shown a great deal of respect by the worker bees. They follow her wherever she goes allowing her clear space to walk in the congested hive.

DRONE BEES

Drones are fertile male bees. They have much the same appearance as the worker bee but are slightly longer, and do not have the ability to sting. They, like the queen do not collect pollen and nectar and take no part in the production of honey and the construction of cells. In fact after the 'swarming' period in the spring is over, they are put to death and no more are allowed to develop until the following spring.

WORKER BEES

Workers are slender and small occurring in great numbers in the bee colony. They are the labourers of the bee world, undertaking many duties in the hive, including collecting pollen and nectar, constructing cells, tending the queen, guarding the hive and nursing the many eggs and grubs (pupae). They are not normally aggressive but possess the ability to sting.

SWARMING

Bees swarm together in the late spring and early summer usually around the months of May and June in order to produce new colonies. Bees swarm when there is competition in the hive from a new queen produced in the cells by the workers feeding ordinary worker pupae on a secretion called hypopharyngeal, commonly known as Royal Jelly. This prolonged feeding allows the common worker pupa to emerge as a Virgin Queen,

who is a direct threat to the existing breeding queen, disrupting the strict social order. When this occurs a swarm of bees leaves its present colony in search of a new location. When they find a suitable site they form a tight mass of bees with the queen guarded in the centre. It is this massive cohesion of bees that many people are alarmed by, seeing them clinging to bushes, trees, fences etc.

ACTION ON FINDING A SWARM

Charnwood Borough Council operates a comprehensive Pest Control Service and can offer advice but does not provide a treatment service as honey bees are beneficial insects.

On finding a bee swarm prevent access to it by children and pet animals and contact a bee keeper for advice and possible professional collection of the swarm - a list of current beekeepers in the area is held by the Pest Control Service, see below for contact details.

If you would like an explanation of this fact sheet in your language or to obtain copies in Braille, on audio tape or large print please contact 01509 634560.

For further information contact:
Pest Control Service
Environmental Health Services
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Southfield Road
Loughborough
Leics LE11 2TX
Tel: 01509 634628
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