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## How to Submit Honey Bee Samples for Identification

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With the arrival of Africanized honey bees in Texas, one of the common concerns is whether bees in a backyard or other site are Africanized. As an educational agency, the Texas Agricultural Extension Service can offer advice and make referrals to competent persons (such as beekeepers, pest control operators or other emergency personnel); however we cannot make site visits or collect bees for identification.

When there is reasonable doubt as to the identity of an aggregation of bees, any person may submit a sample of the colony to the Texas Honey Bee I.D. Lab for identification. The laboratory is located in Bryan, Texas. Currently there is no charge for this service, and the lab will accept bee samples from any location *in Texas*. Proper collection information and adequate numbers of bees must be submitted, however, to get an accurate identification.

Because Africanized honey bees are nearly identical in appearance to our more docile, domesticated (European) honey bees, the only way to make a positive identification is with the use of sophisticated optical and computer equipment. In addition, at least 10 - 20 worker bees must be submitted to accurately test whether the colony is Africanized. Bees collected away from their nest or swarm-- for instance, at feeding or watering sites-- cannot be reliably identified.

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### HOW TO SEND A SAMPLE:

- ! Send bees in a leakproof glass (e.g., mason jar) or plastic jar capable of containing approximately 1/2 pint of bees. This volume should be sufficient to accurately identify the bees. Enough alcohol (ethyl or rubbing) should be included in the jar to at least cover the bees.
- ! Do NOT freeze the sample or allow it to dry out. Either treatment will cause the specimens to become brittle and difficult to dissect. Fifty or more bees may be required for identification in such cases.
- ! To ensure the specimens arrive safely, the jar should be placed in a sturdy box approximately an inch larger than the jar. The jar should have some sort of padding (e.g., newspaper, styrofoam peanuts) between it and the jar. For added safety, this box can be placed in a second, slightly larger, padded box.

- ! The entire collection form (see attached) should be completed. This information is critical for the laboratory, particularly if the specimens are Africanized. For samples collected outside of a city limits, please indicate the nearest city/town, with the distance and direction to the nearest city or town.
- ! If the bees in question have stung someone, please include the persons' name(s) and a brief description of how the stinging incident occurred and what medical care was required (e.g., hospital, etc.). Bee samples involved in stinging incidents will be assigned a higher priority in the identification process.
- ! Use pencil, not pen, when filling out the collection data form. Labels written in ink may be rendered illegible should the jar leak during transport.

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**WHERE TO SEND:**

Specimens should be mailed to the: Texas Honey Bee I.D. Lab, Department of Entomology, 2475 TAMU, College Station, TX 77843-2475

If shipping by UPS, Federal Express, or other private carrier, add: Riverside Campus, Building 4431-Room 313.

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**FOR MORE INFORMATION**

Additional questions on submitting specimens can be directed to the lab by phone (979-847-8771) or via e-mail ([l-bradley2@tamu.edu](mailto:l-bradley2@tamu.edu)). For further information about honey bee swarms and controlling bees, see Texas Agricultural Extension Service publication L-1791, [Honey Bees in and Around Homes](#). General information about Africanized Honey Bees, including a current [distribution map](http://honeybee.tamu.edu), is available at <http://honeybee.tamu.edu>

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**Publication information:**

House & Landscape Series, Internet Factsheet ENT-100x. (Updated 3/2005)

Produced by the Department of Entomology, Texas A&M University,

College Station, TX 77843-2475. URL: <http://entowww.tamu.edu>

Series Editor: M. Merchant.

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