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EC1566 Removing Bees from a Building

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October 1951

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REMOVING BEES FROM A BUILDING

EXTENSION SERVICE
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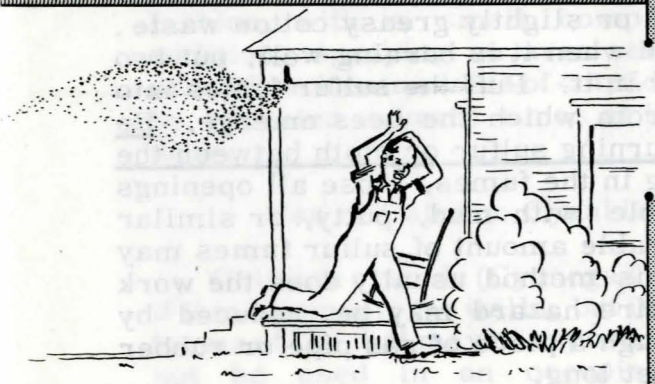
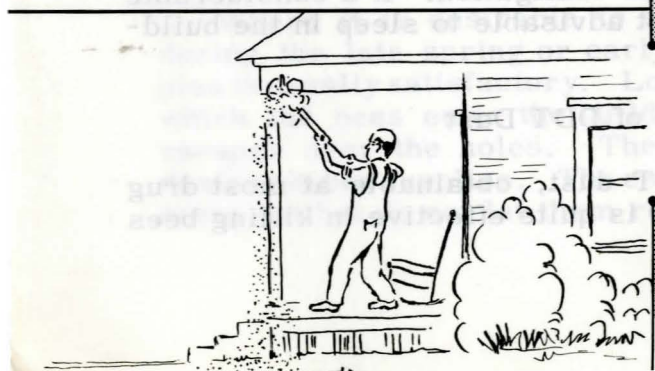


Enter Mrs. Bee.

The County Agent had the Answer.



This is it.
So long Mrs. Bee.

Removing Bees From A Building

Robert W. Helm, Extension Entomologist

Occasionally during the summer, a swarm of honey bees decides to nest in the walls of a house. This usually causes the home owner a great deal of worry. However, there are several methods by which such unwelcome bees can be removed or destroyed. These methods are set forth below.

Use of Sulfur Fumes

For this method it is necessary to have a bee smoker loaded with cotton rags or slightly greasy cotton waste. Light the smoker, and when it is burning well, put two teaspoonfuls of sulfur in it. Puff the sulfur fumes into all of the openings from which the bees emerge. Be careful; do not blow burning sulfur or cloth between the walls. After blowing in the fumes, close all openings as tightly as possible with mud, putty, or similar material. A considerable amount of sulfur fumes may be required, but this method usually does the work satisfactorily. The fire hazard may be reduced by blowing the fumes through a piece of gas pipe or rubber hose at least 2 or 3 feet long.

Use of Carbon Tetrachloride

Carbon tetrachloride can be purchased from your local druggist. It will do a very good job of killing bees. This liquid should be injected with some type of squirting apparatus such as an ordinary bulb-type syringe. An opening should be found or made well above the bees' nest, so the heavy fumes will penetrate downward and suffocate the bees. It is advisable to plug all the openings after treatment. The building should be well aired after fumigation. If a considerable area is treated, it is not advisable to sleep in the building that night.

Use of DDT Dust

A 10 per cent DDT dust, obtainable at most drug stores or seed houses, is quite effective in killing bees

in a building. This material can be purchased in a ready-to-use type of dust gun or can be purchased in package form for use in a hand-style plunger-type dust gun. For this particular use, the hand-style plunger-type dust gun is probably more efficient. It may be necessary to bore a hole near or preferably just above the swarm, if the swarm can be located. The dust should then be blown into the hole in fairly large quantities. DDT treatments would render the honey in the nest unfit for use, in case it should be recovered later. Dust treatments may have to be repeated two or three times at intervals of one or two days.

A 5 per cent DDT spray can be used in a similar fashion with a small compressed air sprayer. In addition, spraying an area several inches in diameter around each entrance is of considerable help, and should be repeated several times at intervals of two or three days.

Use of Calcium Cyanide (Cyanogas A Dust)

Calcium cyanide (Cyanogas A dust) will kill the bees if it is blown into the walls, but it is very dangerous to all forms of life that may be exposed to its fumes. It should not be used in an occupied building. Persons not thoroughly familiar with its use and the dangers involved should not use this material.

Use of Aerosol Bomb

In certain instances of relatively easy access to the swarm, an aerosoltype bomb can be discharged into the opening with fairly good results. Several treatments a few days apart may be needed.

Removing and Saving the Bees

Where it is desirable to save the bees, especially during the late spring or early summer, the following plan is usually satisfactory. Locate the openings through which the bees enter the building and place Porter bee escapes over the holes. These can be obtained from dealers in bee supplies. The escapes permit the bees to come out but do not let them return. The bees will die

if they are not cared for, but if a hive with a frame of brood and a queen can be placed so that its entrance is fairly near the Porter bee escape, the emerging bees will unite with that hive. The queen in the wall will continue to lay eggs, but the young bees that leave the nest will be unable to come back, and in a few weeks the old colony will run out.

After the colony in the wall has run out, the Porter bee escapes can be removed and the bees from the hive will carry out any honey that remains in the walls and will store it in their hives. If Porter bee escapes are not available, use a six-inch screen wire cone having an opening at the tip large enough for a bee to escape. Place the base of the cone over the entrance.

General Instructions

In using any of these suggested methods for removing bees from a building, there is a possibility that the bees will sting unprotected portions of the body. It is always advisable to protect yourself with a bee veil. Gloves which cover the wrists and hands are also helpful, and pants legs should be secured at the ankles with string or elastic. A bee smoker is also very valuable.