

Office of the Commissioner of Agriculture
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WVDA OFFERS ASSISTANCE TO HANDLE HONEY BEE SWARMS

Charleston, W.Va. – You know it's spring when honey bees start making their rounds in gardens, lawns and flowering trees across West Virginia. Exceptionally warm weather this spring brought out the blossoms early and in abundance. As a result, it may trigger honey bee colonies to swarm.

"Swarming is a term used to describe the process by which a new honey bee colony is formed," explained West Virginia Department of Agriculture (WVDA) Apiarist Wade Stiltner. "The queen bee leaves the old colony and up to 60 percent of the worker bees leave with her to start a new colony."

The swarm appears like a tornado of bees circling around with a loud "buzzing" sound. They form a large mass or cluster of bees in places like trees, bushes or on light poles. Scout bees begin the search for a new home. When they find a suitable nest site, they return to the swarm and take flight again to their new home.

"We understand that seeing a swarm of bees may cause panic, but we are asking you call the department once you spot a swarm on your property," stressed Commissioner of Agriculture Kent Leonhardt. "Bees are crucial to the growing season and we would rather see them safely relocated versus being eradicated."

Swarms often cause problems and/or concerns due to their proximity to humans or animals. Anyone who sees or finds a swarm can contact the WVDA. The department has a list of beekeepers called the "Swarm List." They will retrieve the swarm from the premises and find a new home for the honey bees. This protects and preserves our pollinators so they can continue their important job.

For more information, contact the WVDA at 304-558-2212.

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