

A reminder about ground bees and what to do.

We are NOT experts on bees and what is written here is based on personal experience and different articles from people that do know bees.

When you or your horse are stung, the protocol is to yell "Bees!" once and then, depending where you are on the trail, go as quickly as possible through them, or turn and gallop away so you can go around a different route. If you try to get off your horse you not only block the trail for other riders, but you run the risk of injuring yourself. And as for the idea that you can prevent this sort of disaster by riding only on reasonably well used dirt roads and avoiding little used trails, it is obviously a worthless concept because there have been cases where ground bee made their nest along roads and even in paddock areas.

Here are some tips and advice from other riders and bee people while travelling in bee/yellowjacket country:

- Keep your group small. The first horse wakes them up, the second makes them mad, and everybody beyond that gets hit.
- Remember that bees/yellowjackets are territorial, and they are defending the nest. If you cross their perimeter, they WILL attack, no matter what kind of repelling toxin you spray on yourself.
- Some colors incite action from stinging insects faster than others. Avoid yellow, orange, red and white--stick to green, blue, grey, or black if possible.
- MOST important: be ready to RUN. As others have said, standing still to swat is bad practice. Beat feet fast. It is your best defense.

If you do get stung, take a Benadryl immediately. Treat the site with ice asap to reduce the swelling/itching. Baking soda helps, and anti-itch creams do too. I have never had to treat a horse for stings, but I would use ice there, too.

When do bees usually come out? It all depends on the temperature outside. Bees tend to come out when it is warm enough to gather their nectar and return to the hive when it becomes too cold. This is because bees start to feel drowsy and fall asleep if the temperature outside goes below 50 to 55 degrees Fahrenheit. Rain also keeps bees inside, especially if it is significant rain. They generally return to their hives an hour before sunset because they cannot see well in low lighting. Considering all these factors, we typically see bees at their most active in the early afternoon. They will start their nectar gathering in the morning and stop shortly before sunset. So, there you have it. I hope this helps everyone. With the colder weather approaching, you should start seeing less and less bees. Also, the skunks are digging up the nest and eating the larva this time of year. There was a nest just off the black trail that a skunk dug up and the nest was gone. All that was left was a hole in the ground.

Stay alert, stay safe, and enjoy the trails