

Advice for managing bees

Lewes District Council does not generally offer a service for the removal of bees. They are important to the environment and pollinate many plants and flowers. Bee numbers have been reducing so it is important to protect their habitat when possible. Most bees do not cause a nuisance or danger to people but when a nest or swarm is problematic, a Pest Control Officer can visit to offer advice on removal or treatment.

General information

There are many types of bees found in the UK but the following are commonly found.

Honey bees



Images courtesy of www.bbka.org.uk

Honey bees are a similar size to wasps but are mostly black with light tan stripes. They are kept by beekeepers and can also live in the wild, in hollow trees or sometimes in hollow spaces in houses such as chimneys. They are regularly seen in gardens. Honey bees can sting but this is most likely the nearer you are to their hive.

Honey bees live in colonies and when they are moving to a new colony, they form a swarm (see right). They are not usually interested in people when swarming but looking for a safe place for the new colony. It is still best to stay away from them if possible. Local beekeepers can be contacted to collect a swarm and details and more information on honey bees can be found here:



<https://www.bbka.org.uk/swarm>

Bumblebees



Images courtesy of www.bumblebeeconservation.org

Bumblebees are regular garden visitors and important to pollinate flowers and plants. They are quite fat and furry looking. Their numbers are reducing as habitats are destroyed with changes to farming practice so garden flowers are an important source of food. Bumblebees can sting but only do so if they are aggravated.

Bumblebees live in nests in the wild. Some make nests in long grass or look for holes in the ground, trees and bird boxes. They usually prefer dry, dark spaces. The nests vary in size depending on the time of year and type of bumblebee and contain between 50-400 bees. You can help bumblebees to nest by providing them a site and the right flowers in the garden. More information can be found at www.bumblebeeconservation.org which also includes advice on how to move a nest that is inconvenient.



Solitary bees



There are around 250 varieties of solitary bee. You may see them living in grass banks, soft ground or soft mortar between bricks where they tunnel. They often look like honey bees and live in groups (have individual nests close to each other) rather than colonies. Mining bees are a type of solitary bee and do not sting. They are beneficial to the environment and usually stay away from people.

Image courtesy of Entomart (copyright)

Treating bee stings

If a honey bee stings, it leaves the sting in the skin. This is not the case with a bumblebee. If you are stung and the sting is in the skin, it is important to remove it as quickly as possible by scraping it out with your finger nail. This stops more poison entering your skin. Bee stings are painful but in most people, will only cause pain and swelling round the sting site. Using a cloth soaked in cold water or ice can help and there are treatments that can be bought in the chemist – always ask for advice when buying them. If the pain and swelling does not go down in a few days, speak to your GP.

Some people have a severe allergic reaction to bee stings and immediate medical help is required. If they know of the allergy, they may carry an “EpiPen” for the treatment of anaphylactic shock (the severe allergic reaction). Symptoms can include difficulty breathing or wheezing; feeling dizzy or faint; a fast heart rate; nausea, vomiting or diarrhoea; feeling anxious, confused or agitated. This is an emergency and requires urgent medical attention by calling 999. For further information: <https://www.nhs.uk/Conditions/Bites-insect/Pages/Introduction.aspx>