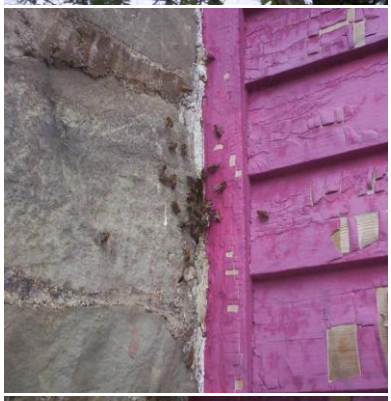
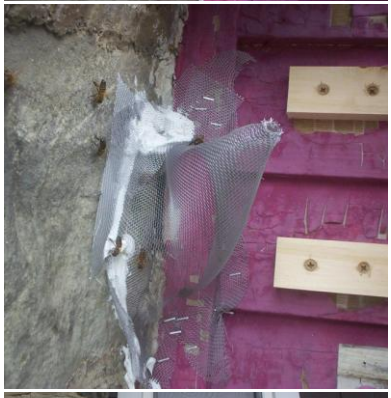
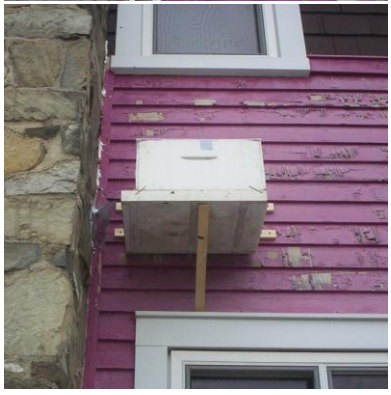
Bee Removal Methods

There are two stages to a feral bee colony development: swarming and establishing a colony.







Swarming

The first is the swarm phase where half or more of the bees in an established colony depart with the queen to form a new colony. The remaining bees raise a new queen and continue the existing colony.

Swarming is how honey bees procreate. The swarm is just a temporary transitional stage until a new colony can be formed. Swarms usually find a place to hang and are usually about the size of a football. Often you will find swarms hanging in trees or on fences. This is a temporary location for the group to form while scout bees hunt out a place to move into and form a colony. Hanging swarms usually move on within a couple of days.

Depending on the height from the ground, the swarm is the easiest to deal with. If they are 20 feet or less from the ground, a bee vac is used to suck the bees into a screened box and removed. If they are higher than 20 feet, a lure hive can be placed on the premises with the goal of the bees forming the colony in the hive instead of someplace else, like in the walls or attic of your house.

Establishing a Colony

The second stage is the actual forming of a colony. This is where the bees finally decide to take up permanent residence and start building comb, raising brood, and storing nectar. They usually try to find a confined space with a minimal opening for an entrance. Sometimes they will take up residence in an old hollow tree. But many times they end up in much less convenient places like the walls or attic or your home.

There are two methods, depending on the situation, that we employ for removing bees from a structure, trapping and cut out.

Trapping

Trapping is a method used when physically creating an opening in the structure is not feasible such as a brick or stone structure. The process involves creating a conical shaped one-way trap over the main entrance and blocking off any secondary entrances. This one-way cone allows the bees to leave freely, but not re-enter the structure. When the field bees leave the nest to forage, they are prevented from returning with nectar and pollen for the colony. With no food incoming to the colony and field bees steadily being removed, the colony starts to dwindle.

A trap hive is placed near the conical trap and is baited with a queen bee. Because the returning bees cannot get back to the colony, they start to gather in and around the trap hive. Within a few days, the bees that have accumulated in the trap hive, accept the trap queen and establish a new colony in the trap hive. After a few weeks, the trap hive begins to thrive, and the original colony becomes very weak. At this point, the conical trap is removed. This allows bees from the trap hive to enter and steal any remaining nectar or honey from the weaker colony.

Once the trap hive removes the remaining nectar and honey, the entrance can be sealed. The benefits of this method are that there is minimal damage to the structure (minor stapling of funnel, caulking, and screws) and excess honey and nectar is removed. The drawback is that it can take up to 12 weeks for completion and the wax comb is left in the structure.

Cut Out

The cut out method is the physical removal of the bees and all comb. This is the most difficult method, but provides the best results. The hardest part is to identify where the core nest of honey bees are located. In some cases it can be 10 feet or more from the entrance. Although the entrance is in an exterior wall, the actual nest could be located further into the dwelling such as in the space between a lower story ceiling and the upper story floor.

It can be a guessing game as to the nest's actual locations, and at times it can take multiple openings before it is located. Once the nest is located, the opening in the wall or ceiling must be made large enough to expose the entire nest. Once exposed, a bee vac is used to suck the bees into a screened box. The wax comb is then cut out in sections and mounted into wooden frames that will be given back to the bees once they are relocated and placed into a new hive.

Depending on the amount of nectar and honey, this can be a very sticky process. When the cavity is scraped clean, the exterior entrance should be sealed to prevent a future swarm from moving into the same place.

The benefits of this method are that all remnants of the colony are removed and it usually can be done in a few hours. The drawback is that it requires repairs to the structure.

The most important thing in removing a colony is not only to remove the bees, but also to get as much of the nest remnants as well, to reduce the chances of future damage. This is why attempting to seal the bees in the wall to die, which usually just causes them to find a way into the house, or poisoning them is not recommended. The hygroscopic properties of honey (water absorbing) causes it to ferment and soak into the walls. It is nearly impossible to paint over such a stain, and in most cases requires replacement. The dead brood and bees, pollen, honey and wax will start to smell and draw pests such as mice, beetles, moths, and roaches.

Source: www.bushkillfarms.com/removal-methods/