With the March 5 find
of Africanized honey
bees in Calabasas,
the expansion of
Africanized honey
bees encompasses
Imperial and San
Bernadino counties
and parts of San
Diego, Los Angeles,
Riverside and
Ventura counties.

The bees have not only increased in number
but also greatly in range. The bees have since
moved well north into the Mojave Desert with
the outermost finds near Victorville, Barstow
and Las Vegas. The extensive desert bloom in
the spring following the wet winter of 1997 may
have provided additional foraging opportunities.

During 1998, the scientists also found
Africanized bees near 5,000 feet in the moun-
tains surrounding the L.A. Basin. Advancement
into the L.A. Basin shows the AHB’s ability to
overcome environmental barriers and exploit
new habitat. Nielsen says AHB finds near
Barstow in 1998 indicate it is likely that the bees
have since moved toward the base of the
Tehachapis — the mountain range separating
the Mojave Desert from the San Joaquin Valley.

The many new AHB finds in the L.A. Basin
in 1999 are evidence that the bees have success-
fully colonized this region. Human activities,
ample food and abundant water create an ideal
environment year-round for Africanized bees to
greatly increase their numbers. The mild coastal
conditions, available forage and lack of moun-
tainous barriers will allow the bees to spread
easily along the coastline to neighboring areas
such as San Diego and Santa Barbara.

“The extent of the bees potential northern
advancement is unknown,” Nielsen says, “but
Monterey and San Francisco are very feasible
destinations. Once the coast is colonized, move-
ment into the Central Valley from these coastal
regions is extremely likely due to the low eleva-
tion of the Coast Range.”