

PREFERENCE OF APIS MELLIFERA THE TYPES FLOWERS OF MELON

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The melon (*Cucumis mello* L.) is the eighth fruit produced and is among the top ten exported fresh fruits in Brazil. Its depends of biotic pollination, bees *Apis mellifera*, which visit flowers searching for nectar and pollen. The melon has flowers of two types, male and hermaphrodite. With the aim of verifying the preference and the type of floral resource foraging, an experiment was conducted at the University of Bahia, in Juazeiro-BA, Brazil, during the months of november and december 2010. The cultivar used was the yellow melon, with 0,25ha, and 0.60m spacing between plants and 1m between lines. Direct observations were conducted under field conditions during three consecutive days, the hours of 7am to 17h, and recorded the number of visits, the floral resource foraging, the type of flowers visited and the volume of nectar provided by flowers. The highest numbers of visits were the hours of 8am to 12h, registering an average of 27 ± 16 visits to hermaphrodites flowers and 26.2 ± 1.4 for the male flowers. It was recorded a preference for nectar collection in hermaphrodite flowers (22.3 ± 12.7) compared to male flowers (19 ± 13.1). The volume of nectar in the hermaphrodite flowers was higher than that of male flowers at all times recorded. The number of visits for pollen was significantly lower than that of nectar collection in both types of flowers, with a mean of 5.2 ± 4.1 for hermaphrodite flowers and 7.2 ± 4.3 for male flowers. The recorded data indicate that bees *Apis mellifera*, show a preference for nectar collection in hermaphrodite flowers of melon.