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VERTEBRATE FECES ARE STORED INSIDE COLONIES OF *Melipona flavolineata* TO BE USED LATER AS BUILDING MATERIAL

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Some stingless bee species harvest vertebrate feces, mix with resins and use to close the gaps of the hive. Recently we observed a different behavior in *Melipona flavolineata*, which stored vertebrate feces at the bottom of the hive instead of using it immediately after harvesting. The aim of this contribution was to study why this species store feces inside the colony and what do they do with it. The study was performed at Belém-PA, between February and April 2012. Two colonies were used; they were kept in observation hives and each one was observed for 15 min twice a day for 60 days. It was observed that the species *M. flavolineata* keep one or two feces piles, which were around 6 cm² each. The feces were harvested from environment and added to the piles before being used. When no disturbance occurred, the workers were macerating the feces with their mandibles. When the area where the piles were became too humid, with visible water around, the workers carried the feces to a dry location. The feces stayed there for several days without being used until a disturbance occurred. When we removed the glass lid for cleaning it, immediately the bees started to make small balls of feces with their mandibles, mix with resins from resin piles and close the gaps between the new lid and the hive. Therefore, we conclude that *M. flavolineata* uses feces as a building material, producing “batume” with it, but differently from other species, they store the feces at the bottom of the hive until needed.

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