

State of California  
Department of Food and Agriculture  
Integrated Pest Management  
(916) 654-0768

### **INFORMATION FOR BEEKEEPERS**

**INTRODUCTION:** California beekeepers operate over 500,000 colonies, about 10 percent of the nation's bees. California bee breeders annually market about one-half million pounds of live package bees and over one-half million queen bees. Each year about 600,000 honeybee colonies are rented one or more times by California beekeepers to growers of crops requiring insect pollination.

**ADVICE TO BEGINNERS:** The successful beekeeper is one who understands bee behavior and enjoys handling bees. It is advisable to begin with only a few colonies using healthy bees and standard equipment. Valuable experience can be gained by working with an experienced beekeeper. Bees must receive proper care and be protected from disease, pests, and injurious chemicals.

A number of beekeeping publications are available at farm advisors offices or from Agricultural Publications, 6701 San Pablo Avenue, University of California, Oakland, CA 94608. Bee books may be seen at libraries or purchased from bee supply dealers. Beekeepers may subscribe to the American Bee Journal (Dadant & Sons, Hamilton, IL 62340) or Gleanings in Bee Culture (A. R. Root Co., Median, OH 44256). Information on honey may be obtained from the California Honey Advisory Board, P.O. Box 265, Sonoma, CA 95476.

**LOCATION OF APIARIES:** Apiaries are welcome in most farming areas provided the bees do not interfere with necessary farm operations such as cultivation, pesticide treatments, and harvesting. Apiaries should never be placed upon another person's property without consent.

Apiaries in residential areas should be small and receive special attention regarding appearance, placement, flight pattern, water supply, foraging areas, swarm control, temper of bees, and attitude of neighbors to avoid complaints.

**BEE LAWS:** California bee laws, enforced by county agricultural commissioners throughout the State, provide the basis for an effective apiary inspection program to help beekeepers protect honeybee colonies from disease, pesticide, and theft.

**REGISTRATION:** All apiaries must be registered by January 1, with the agricultural commissioner of the county in which the colonies are located. Registration is \$10 per county, and consists of listing the location of each apiary and the number of colonies at each location. Newly acquired apiaries and apiaries brought into the State must be registered within 30 days.

**APIARY MOVEMENTS:** Any movement of colonies in which American foulbrood (AFB) disease has been found within 60 days must be reported within 5 days to the agricultural commissioner of the county in which the movement originated. Similar notification must also be sent to the county of destination if the colonies are moved to another county. Bee colonies or used bee equipment entering California must be accompanied by a certificate showing apiary at origin had been inspected and AFB disease abated prior to shipment. County agricultural commissioners certify qualified apiaries upon request (fee required in most counties) to meet entry requirements of other states and countries.

**APIARY IDENTIFICATION:** Apiaries kept away from beekeepers' residence (out-apiaries) must be identified by a sign showing the name, address, and phone number of the operator in black letters at least one inch high.

**BRAND NUMBERS:** Beekeepers may obtain a transferrable apiary brand number (fee \$25) by sending a completed application with the required fee to: Cashier/Financial Services, California Department of Food and Agriculture, 1220 N Street, Room 140, Sacramento, CA 95814. (This fee does **not** include the cost of the branding iron, which can only be purchased directly from a manufacture). Brands may not be altered in any way. It is unlawful for anyone to have apiary equipment branded with any serial number brand other than his/her own without a bill of sale. Brand number and iron may be transferred by a bill of sale. If the new owner already has a brand, he/she may have additional brand numbers transferred to his/her name without charge, by sending the bill of sale to: Apiary Project Leader, California Department of Food and Agriculture, 1220 N Street, Room 341, Sacramento, CA 95814, with a statement that the iron has been destroyed. (Apiary registration forms, application forms for apiary brand numbers, and bill of sale forms are available at county agricultural commissioners' offices).

**DISEASE CONTROL:** AFB is a constant threat to beekeeping. Beekeepers should watch for signs of this disease in their colonies and promptly destroy any colony found diseased. Certain drugs are effective in preventing disease development but must be used according to label directions to avoid serious problems. Inspectors periodically survey apiaries for disease and are available to help with disease problems outside the beekeepers control. Inspectors may enter any apiary to determine whether disease is present. The inspector is required to make a complete inspection of all hives in an apiary if he finds that AFB disease has infected more than two hives in apiaries of 99 colonies or less, or more than two percent of colonies in apiaries of 100 or more, and require the owner of such hives to pay the cost of the complete inspection. All colonies must be kept in movable comb hives so the brood can be examined. Colonies found to be diseased with AFB must be destroyed by burning or delivered to a licensed wax salvage plant for rendering. Any apiary in which AFB is found may be placed in quarantine until the disease has been abated. Nothing may be removed from a quarantined apiary except under the direct supervision of an inspector unless a permit is obtained. It is unlawful to keep, sell, or treat any AFB diseased colony. Comb must not be exposed to robbing by bees. Extraction or rendering of honey, pollen, or wax from comb must be done in a bee tight building or enclosure. Open air feeding of honey is prohibited.

**PESTICIDES:** Beekeepers should know which pesticides injure bees and work closely with growers and pest control operators to safeguard bees. Advance notification of pesticide applications near bees can be obtained by filing a written request with the agricultural commissioner. Beekeepers requesting such notification must give advance notice of apiary movements for maximum protection. Beekeepers should file a report of pesticide application. Damages for losses resulting from pest control operations may not be recovered unless report of loss has been filed and affected apiary was properly identified and registered and movement notice given.

**BEEKEEPER ORGANIZATIONS:** Beekeeper organization are active in some counties. The California State Beekeepers Association (209) 667-4590, Western Apicultural Society (530) 752-0472, and the American Beekeeping Federation (912) 427-4233, which meet annually at different locations.