

The WVDA works to protect the public as well as the general beekeeper. In doing so we have produce The West Virginia Honey Bee Best Management Practices guide lines. This is a voluntary program in which WV registered beekeepers can receive limits on liability by signing a written agreement. Beekeepers must agree to follow §61-2-4 as describe under Limits of Liability.

1. §61-2-4. Limits on Liability.

4.1. A beekeeper may obtain limits on liability who:

4.1.a. Signs a Honey Bee Best Management Practices compliance agreement to be kept on file at the West Virginia Department of Agriculture headquarters; and

4.1.b. Voluntarily conforms with Honey Bee Best Management Practices contained in subsection 4.2. of this rule.

4.2. West Virginia Honey Bee Best Management Practices (HBBMP):

4.2.a. West Virginia Beekeepers shall post a honey bee caution sign in or near the apiary.

4.2.b. West Virginia Beekeepers shall limit the number of hives in relation to property lot size in accordance with the following:

4.2.b.(1) Less than 1/2 acre - 4 colonies (1/2 acre = 21,780 sq. ft., roughly 100 ft. x 218 ft.)

4.2.b.(2) More than 1/2 acre, less than 1 acre - 6 colonies (1 acre = 43,560 sq. ft., roughly 150 ft. x 290 ft.); and

4.2.b.(3) 1 acre or more - 8 colonies (1 acre = 43,560 sq. ft., roughly 150 ft. x 290 ft.)

4.2.c. Regardless of lot size: If all hives are situated at least 200 feet in any direction from all property lines of the lot on which the apiary is situated, or as long as all adjoining property that falls within a 200-foot radius of any hive is undeveloped property, there are no limit on the number of hives.

4.2.d. West Virginia beekeepers:

4.2.d.(1) Shall have hive entrances face away from neighboring property and in such a direction that bees fly across the beekeeper's property a sufficient distance to gain a height of six feet. If bordering property is within a distance of 50 feet, the beekeeper shall use barriers (hedges, shrubs or fencing six feet high) to redirect the bees' flight pathway and establish bee flight pathways above head height;

4.2.d.(2) Shall maintain a water source near the colonies at a distance less than the nearest unnatural water supply;

4.2.d.(3) Shall not keep an apiary within 50 feet of an established animal that is tethered, kennelled or otherwise prevented from escaping a stinging incident;

4.2.d.(4) Should avoid opening colonies for inspection or manipulation when neighbors are present or in the immediate vicinity;

4.2.d.(5) Should avoid purchasing queens and honey bees from areas that are documented as having been designated as an established Africanized Honey Bee (AHB) zone;

4.2.d.(6) Shall manage all colonies to minimize swarming;

4.2.d.(7) Shall replace queens in colonies exhibiting defensive behaviour that may be injurious to the general public or domesticated animals as determined by Department's apiary staff.

4.2.e. A collection site for holding colonies prior to shipment, or a staging area, shall have undeveloped property surrounded by a natural barrier and shall be marked with a honey bee caution sign.

4.2.f. Anyone transporting colonies shall secure the load and screen entrances or place a net over the colonies to prevent bees from escaping.

4.2.g. West Virginia Beekeepers shall properly discard all pesticides and other control agents after use according to label directions.

4.2.h. Honey Bees used for public demonstrations, entertainment or educational purposes shall be enclosed so as to avoid the release of honey bees to the public.

4.2.i. In the event that Africanized Honey Bee (AHB) infestation is determined to be established in West Virginia by the Department, additional rules promulgated by the Commissioner of Agriculture will be followed.

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