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GOVERNOR

STATE OF MICHIGAN
DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT

GARY MCDOWELL
DIRECTOR

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Dear Michigan Beekeeper:

This letter provides guidance to beekeepers about colony movement and apiary activities during the COVID-19 pandemic. The Michigan Department of Agriculture and Rural Development (MDARD) understands the importance that managed pollinators, honeybees in particular, have in pollinating Michigan's agricultural crops, gardens, and the environment.

MDARD is aware that beekeepers must move their colonies to both interstate and intrastate locations to provide pollination services to agriculture. Additionally, movement of colonies by beekeepers from one location to another may be needed to provide the colonies with sufficient sources of pollen and nectar to sustain their health and vigor. This includes the introduction of weak colonies from areas that have a dearth of nutrients to more favorable, nutrient-rich environments.

By standard practice, bees are moved at night because during the day foragers from the colonies are out in the environment collecting pollen and nectar to bring back to the hive. Moving colony locations during the day causes the foraging bees to be left behind and not deliver their stores to the colony. Occasionally, on a rainy or cold (less than 40 degrees) day, colonies can be moved because foraging activity is limited.

Additionally, MDARD recognizes several beekeeping practices necessary to keep a strong force of honey bees available for pollination services:

- Selling bees during COVID 19: All beekeepers must practice social distancing and avoid groups while selling bees. MDARD recommends the following:
 - Schedule times for beekeepers to pick-up their packages, nucs, queens or other beekeeping equipment.
 - Payments should be done ahead of time to limit personal interaction.
 - Buyers should stay in their vehicle during pick-up and allow the seller to place the package, nucs, queens or beekeeping equipment in or on their vehicle.
 - All bees and beekeeping equipment must be properly secured for transport, prior to transport to avoid accidental opening or loss.

- Pollination services during Covid-19: Beekeepers must practice social distancing and avoid groups when delivering or picking up colonies of bees from pollination locations. MDARD recommends the following:
 - Schedule times for placement and retrieval of colonies from pollination locations in advance.
 - Contracts, mapping of pollination locations and payment for pollination services should be conducted electronically whenever possible to prevent person to person contact.

- Management of apiaries during COVID-19: Beekeepers must practice appropriate management of honey bee colonies to ensure proper honey bee health. This includes, but is not limited to, inspections, treatments for disease and parasites, and management for honey crops. Beekeepers must practice social distancing and avoid groups when conducting management practices for the care of honeybees.
 - Michigan beekeepers manage honeybees in apiary locations of one to more than 150 sites.
 - As with all agricultural practices, beekeepers will need to routinely visit their apiaries to conduct management practices.

Michigan agriculture depends on beekeepers to provide pollination services recognizing that beekeepers have to manage honey production, conduct pest and disease management practices and transport bees when necessary. The Department supports the ability of all Michigan beekeepers to continue beekeeping practices necessary to maintain a vital beekeeping industry in this state.

Reference: Care of Farm Animals: GAAMPS for Beekeeping,
https://www.michigan.gov/mdard/0,4610,7-125-1599_1605---,00.html

Michigan Managed Pollinator Protection Plan:
https://www.michigan.gov/mdard/0,4610,7-125-2390_76976---,00.html

Michigan Pollinator Initiative: www.pollinators.msu.edu

Sincerely,



Mike Hansen, State Apiarist
Pesticide and Plant Pest Management Division