

BEE AWARE

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News and Notes from The Texas Apiary Inspection Service



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This office was notified of stolen bees and equipment in Grimes and Brazos Counties in February (around 18-20 pallets from one yard and 3-4 pallets in another yard). Beekeepers, check your apiaries and keep records on total colonies. Brand the equipment in accordance with the Texas Agriculture Code or clearly and indelibly mark the equipment with the owners name and address. This is for your protection and is in the best interest for all beekeepers in Texas. Check with the landowners and ask them to keep an eye out for unidentified or strange trucks around your locations or areas.

A large percent or majority of my readers are beekeepers with 1 or 2 hives or people interested in beekeeping. So, I will look or write this article in a different way about "Stolen Bees and Equipment".

1. California has a high demand for colonies of bees in February and March during the almond pollination season. They need over 1.3 million colonies of honeybees primarily in the Sacramento and San Joaquin Valley. Almond pro-

duction in the United States is limited almost exclusively to this area, which produces more than one-third of the world's supply of almonds. The honeybee is practically the only pollinating insect of economic importance for almonds, which growers will pay top dollar for bee rental. Today, bee rental is around \$135—\$150 per hive.

The 84 –96 colonies stolen in the above counties at bee rental alone are worth \$11,340-\$14,400.

2. The past year we have talked about the Colony Collapse Disorder (CCD) problems in journals, newspapers, radio and TV and at beekeepers meetings. How CCD has destroyed 50%-75% of a commercial outfits across the United States. This has made many commercial beekeepers a little scared and confused about this "mysterious bee killer". Not every beekeeper has been affected with this problem, and only a few commercial outfits. What is strange, however,

a beekeeper may have this problem and his neighbor down the road 1/2 mile does not have CCD. There is no pattern. Therefore, many commercial beekeepers are placing orders for queens, nucs and cells. During the 2008 bee season, a high demand is placed on bee hives. A double deep hive may cost \$135-\$175 and if the equipment is new, even higher. So the 84-96 colonies that were reported stolen, at 2008 prices alone are worth \$11,340-\$16,800.

We have looked at this theft problem from two different points of view; 1) pollination value and 2) 2008 bee season prices. This beekeeper has lost between \$11,340 and \$16,800. We have not considered splits that could be made, honey and wax production, nor other pollination that occurs in mid-summer. Plus the value of the bees and equipment, may be low. So fellow beekeepers, keep a close watch on your hives, they may be worth more than you expect.