

BEE AWARE

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News and Notes from The Texas Apiary Inspection Service



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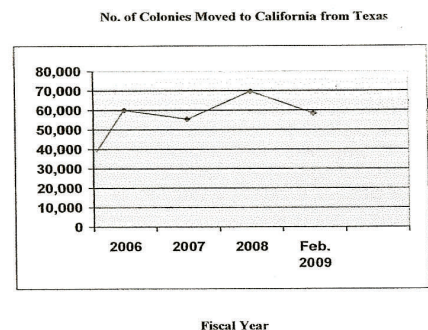
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Almond production is a major business in California, which produces more than one-third of the world supply of almonds. The climatic conditions require summer months to be hot and dry and require chilling during dormancy with freezing weather conditions in the latter part of February.

The almond farmer requiring maximum yields depends upon the cross-pollination of all flowers to obtain the heaviest set of almonds. There is an old saying, "No pollination, no set, no yields, leads to zero dollars per acre". The orchard needs at least two to three strong colonies of honeybees per acre, distributed within the area in small groups. Generally, California has 1.4 million almond trees in production which requires 2.8 to 4.2 million colonies of honeybees in top condition in order for a heavy bee concentration on the trees. The flowers open, late January to late March, when days are short and cool, and temperatures restrict bee flight to 1 to 3 hours at midday. This time of the year, the bee colonies are generally in their weakest condition, having just come out of winter.

California beekeepers cannot meet this pollination demand for the almond orchards and this has created a serious problem for the growers. The honeybee is the primary pollinating insect of economic importance for almonds and growers need them 1) in large numbers, 2.8 to 4.2 million colonies; 2) colony condition to be strong; 3) brief pollination period; and 4) adjoining states cannot meet this demand. Therefore, leasing fees have greatly increased over the past years. Beekeepers from all over the country, including Texas, have moved colonies into California to provide pollination service. (See Figure 1.)

Figure 1



NOTE: Received note from TDA, Havistan has Section-18 approval for varroa mite control in Texas. Please see our website at <http://tais.tamu.edu> or call our office for more information.

