

A message from Secretary of Agriculture Douglas Fisher to NJ Beekeepers:

This letter is intended to provide some guidance to beekeepers about colony movement during this COVID-19 pandemic. The Secretary of Agriculture, Director of Plant Industry, and the State Apiarist are working closely on this issue because of the importance that honeybees have on pollinating New Jersey's agriculture crops and the environment. However, all Executive Orders issued by Governor Murphy must be followed, including the essential need for social distancing.

Please keep the following documents with you while moving bees during the COVID-19 outbreak:

New Jersey State Registration Certificate

Permit from State of Origin (packages, nucs, pollination)

Any Import/Export Permits issued by New Jersey or other states

Pollination Contracts with address/contact information

Moving bees during COVID-19

Beekeepers need to move their hives to both interstate and intrastate locations to provide pollination services to farmers. Additionally, the 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 which results in colonies becoming weakened and not being able to survive. Occasionally, on a rainy or very cold (less than 40 degrees) day colonies can be moved because there is extremely limited, or no foraging activity being conducted by the bees. During these conditions, beekeepers would be able to move their colonies during the day without any issues.

Beekeepers are concerned that they will be stopped by law enforcement if found travelling on the roadways, moving their colonies between 8 p.m. and 5 a.m. The Department advises beekeepers to make every effort to move their colonies beginning at sunset when most foragers have returned or early in the morning before bees begin to forage. However, they may have to travel a distance and be on New Jersey roads or highways during the curfew to reach their destination. The Secretary of Agriculture understands this need to move bees during various times.

Selling bees during COVID-19

Under Executive Order 104, all beekeepers must practice social distancing and avoid groups while selling bees. The Department strongly recommends:

- Schedule times for beekeepers to pick up their packages or nucs,
- 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 or nucs in or on their vehicle.

- Nucs or packages must be properly secured for transport, prior to transport to avoid accidental opening or loss.

Beekeepers are always responsible for checking their equipment and outside of colonies for any stage of the Spotted Lanternfly (SLF) or their egg masses. The egg masses are predominately found from late fall and hatch around May. Currently eight New Jersey counties remain under quarantine for SLF: Burlington, Camden, Gloucester, Hunterdon, Mercer, Salem, Somerset and Warren. If you are selling or moving bees in or out of these eight counties you must get a SLF permit from the Department. The permit and training are free and can be found online at: <https://www.nj.gov/agriculture/divisions/pi/prog/spottedlanternfly.html>.

Also, be aware of SLF if you are purchasing bees from Pennsylvania, Delaware, Maryland, or West Virginia. Each of these states has specific county quarantines as well, and permitting is also required.

The information contained herein is subject to change. Forward any questions to the State Apiarist.