



Requirements and Suggestions for Honeybee Shipments Entering California



Inspections

Honeybee shipments entering California are subject to two inspections: A cursory inspection at the border station and a more detailed inspection at destination. These inspections are necessary because hitchhiking insect and weed pests—especially red imported fire ant (RIFA)—are often found associated with bee colonies.

Ant Free Certification Program



Diffuse Knapweed



Imported Fire Ant

In cooperation with several states, CDFA participates in a voluntary apiary certification program. Shipments entering California with “ant free” certification, issued by a regulatory official in the origin state, are subject to less stringent inspection requirements than shipments without certification. Under this program, certified shipments have a tolerance of up to five hitchhiking worker ants without being rejected at the border.

Additionally, certified shipments will be allowed to offload at destination without waiting for clearance

from the County Agricultural Commissioner if no ants or other pests are found at the border station. Although this certification is not required to enter California, beekeepers are urged to have their colonies inspected and certified to expedite entry. Contact your state apiarist to determine if they are participating in this program.

What to Expect

At the Border Station

Bee keepers may avoid many delays at the border by following pest management practices, obtaining “ant free” certification, and assuring hives and pallets are free from soil, weeds, and plant debris.

Inspectors must check the exterior colonies and pallets; often this inspection requires the lifting of bee nets. While inspectors may assist with lifting and reattaching nets, it is ultimately the driver’s responsibility to make the shipment ready for inspection.

Scientists from CDFA’s Plant Pest Diagnostics Laboratory must identify suspect pests found on bee shipments. Identifications are generally made electronically through photographs taken at the border station. Pest specimens are usually identified quickly when the shipment arrives during normal business hours (8 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday through Friday). Although efforts are made to contact scientists after-hours, arriving at the border outside of lab business hours may cause delays if pests are found.

If a pest of concern is found or the colonies are contaminated with excessive soil or debris, the colonies and pallets must be cleaned (typically by pressure washing) prior to entering the state. The Needles Border Station, located on interstate 40, has facilities (parking and water) where cleanings can take place. Shipments entering through all other stations must return out of state for cleaning if pests of concern are found. Truck drivers are responsible for arranging the cleaning and any associated expenses.



Bee Colonies Being Inspected at Truckee

If no pests of concern are detected at the border station, the shipment is placed under a Quarantine Hold Notice and allowed to proceed to destination where it will be subject to inspection by the County Agricultural Department. Drivers should be prepared to give the exact physical location or address where the colonies will be placed (P.O. Boxes are not acceptable), the number of colonies, and the state of most recent origin (Township and range or GPS coordinates may be substituted for a physical address). This information is required so the appropriate county can be notified of the impending arrival of the shipment.

At Destination

Shipments entering under Quarantine Hold Notice must proceed to the destination address on the form unless authorization is given by the County Agricultural Department to divert the shipment. Using the contact information on the hold notice, the driver or other responsible party must contact the County Agricultural Department for inspection. The shipment may not be offloaded until permission is given by the county inspector unless the shipment accompanied by an “ant free” certificate. Most counties maintain business hours of 8 a.m. – 5 p.m., Monday through Friday, but hours may vary by county.

Watering Bees

Be aware some sources of fresh water used for watering bees could conflict with other water users in the area. Some locations used for years to place bees have now been encroached upon by residential developments. Some jurisdictions in California may consider bees watering in residential areas, such as backyard swimming pools, a nuisance if they get complaints from fearful residents.

Bee Posting Requirements

Section 29046(a), of the California Food and Agriculture Code requires that bee colonies be “posted.” This means each location where bees are placed must have markings designating the person(s) responsible for the bees. This requirement can be met by markings on boxes or a conspicuous sign that includes a name, address and phone number where the owner or his/her representative can be easily reached.

For more information contact:

**California Department of Food and Agriculture
Pest Exclusion Branch:
(916) 654-0312**