

2017/18 Massachusetts Honey Bee Health Survey

Beekeeper

- 49 beekeepers responded from 12 counties; Middlesex (22%), Worcester (16%), Essex (12%), Berkshire (12%), Norfolk (11%), Bristol (10%), Plymouth (8%), Barnstable (6%), Hampden (4%), Hampshire (4%), Franklin (2%), Suffolk (2%)
- Hobby/Backyard beekeepers (88%)
- Been keeping honey bees for less than 6 years (84%)
- Currently have or had a mentor in the past (56%)
- Attended a Bee School course (71%)
- Interested in Massachusetts Master Beekeeping Program, if available (94%)
- Heard about the survey through their MDAR Website (43%)
- Been inspected by MDAR Apiary Program (47%)

Apiary

- Apiaries are stationary, not migratory, and situated in MA year round (100%)
- Apiaries situated adjacent to vegetation (74%) (i.e. forest, field, crop field)
- Urban or suburban (67%) landscape type describes 6 mile radius area around apiary
- Not used for crop pollination (88%)

Colony

- Colonies were Italian (76%) and less than 1 year old (74%)
- Colonies were started from package bees (69%)
- Queens were Italian (71%) and less than 1 year old (65%)
- Colonies were not re-queened (43%)
- Colonies that were re-queened used queens purchased from Massachusetts beekeepers (47%)

Management

- Managed using 10 frame Langstroth hives (80%) on wax foundation (67%)
- Brood comb was 1-3years old (57%) and no frame comb was replaced during season (35%)
- Left 5-10 filled frames of honey stores for winter in colonies (47%)
- Fed granulated sugar and homemade sugar patty (78%)

Monitoring and Treatments

- Applied Varroa mite treatments (79%)
- Did not do a pre/post count to determine need and effectiveness of Varroa mite treatments (45%), but those that did relied on sticky boards (42%), sugar shake (42%), and alcohol wash (36%) monitoring tools
- Applied mite treatments in Fall (68%) and Summer (59%)
- Used mite treatments of Mite-Away Quick Strips (MAQS) (49%), Oxalic Acid (OA) (25%), Apiguard (22%), screened bottom boards (20%), brood break/re-queen (16%), and Apivar (14%)
- Did not apply medications (84%)

Colony Losses

- Total of 298 living overwintered and added colonies from April 2017 to April 2018
- Total loss of 149 colonies from April 2017 to April 2018 (50%)
- Colony losses were reported to be attributed to Varroa mites (19%), Environmental factors (i.e. drought, heat, etc.) (24%), Queen Failure (11%), Viruses (5%), Starvation (9%), Natural disaster (i.e. bear attack, etc.) (6%), Colony Collapse Disorder (CCD) (5%), Pesticides (1%), European Foulbrood (EFB) (1%), and Nosema (1%)

Note: All values are either listed as % of respondents or % of hives based on beekeeper responses.