

# THE COMMONWEALTH OF MASSACHUSETTS

EXECUTIVE OFFICE OF ENERGY AND ENVIRONMENTAL AFFAIRS



## Department of Agricultural Resources

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### BULLETIN 2020-15

To: Massachusetts Honey Beekeepers

From: John Lebeaux, Commissioner Department of Agricultural Resources

Date: April 8, 2020

Re: COVID-19, Honey Bee Colony Health Inspections

On March 10<sup>th</sup>, 2020, the Baker-Polito Administration announced new guidance for Executive Branch employees in order to prevent and mitigate the spread of the Coronavirus (COVID-19), which included working remotely. The Department has had to evaluate and prioritize all the inspectional and regulatory services that it provides based on this directive.

The Department has been contacted by the beekeeping community regarding the status of its apiary inspection program. The Department will continue to provide **only** the following honey bee colony health inspections as they are designated as essential agriculture:

- Emergency inspections (i.e., pesticide bee kill and American Foulbrood) for all beekeepers;
- Import/Export inspections for commercial beekeepers and suppliers

At this time, the Department will not be conducting colony inspections for sideliners and hobbyists as this is a service that the Department provides and not a regulatory requirement. The Department understands the value of these inspections for the beekeepers but must minimize to the risk that COVID-19 poses to Department inspectors and the public. As the situation with COVID-19 evolves, the Department will continue to evaluate the services it provides and communicate any changes to beekeepers.

While this is a very challenging time, please know that the Department is committed to serving its constituents and stakeholders and will continue to work in the most helpful and supportive manner possible. We appreciate your patience and understanding, as together, we navigate this rapidly evolving challenging situation.

If you have any questions about this Bulletin, please contact Kim Skyrn, Chief Apiary Inspector, Massachusetts Department of Agricultural Resources, at [Kim.Skyrm@mass.gov](mailto:Kim.Skyrm@mass.gov).