



WEST VIRGINIA SECRETARY OF STATE
KRIS WARNER
ADMINISTRATIVE LAW DIVISION

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Office of West Virginia
Secretary Of State

**NOTICE OF AGENCY APPROVAL OF A PROPOSED RULE AND FILING WITH THE LEGISLATIVE RULE-
MAKING REVIEW COMMITTEE**

AGENCY: Agriculture TITLE-SERIES: 61-02
RULE TYPE: Legislative Amendment to Existing Rule: Yes Repeal of existing rule: No
RULE NAME: 61-02 West Virginia Apiary Rule

PRIMARY CONTACT

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CITE STATUTORY AUTHORITY: §19-13-3, 19-13-4

EXPLANATION OF THE STATUTORY AUTHORITY FOR THE LEGISLATIVE RULE, INCLUDING A DETAILED SUMMARY OF THE EFFECT OF EACH PROVISION OF THE LEGISLATIVE RULE WITH CITATION TO THE SPECIFIC STATUTORY PROVISION WHICH EMPOWERS THE AGENCY TO ENACT SUCH RULE PROVISION:

The code allows the Department to establish general operating rules and procedures for the inspection of apiaries, control of bee diseases, and limitation of liability for beekeepers.

IS THIS FILING SOLELY FOR THE SUNSET PROVISION REQUIREMENTS IN W. VA. CODE §29A-3-19(e)? No

IF YES, DO YOU CERTIFY THAT THE ONLY CHANGES TO THE RULE ARE THE FILING DATE, EFFECTIVE DATE AND AN EXTENSION OF THE SUNSET DATE? No

DATE eFiled FOR NOTICE OF HEARING OR PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD: 6/17/2026

DATE OF PUBLIC HEARING(S) OR PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD ENDED: 7/17/2026

COMMENTS RECEIVED: No

(IF YES, PLEASE UPLOAD IN THE COMMENTS RECEIVED FIELD COMMENTS RECEIVED AND RESPONSES TO COMMENTS)

PUBLIC HEARING: No

(IF YES, PLEASE UPLOAD IN THE PUBLIC HEARING FIELD PERSONS WHO APPEARED AT THE HEARING(S) AND TRANSCRIPTS)

RELEVANT FEDERAL STATUTES OR REGULATIONS: No

WHAT OTHER NOTICE, INCLUDING ADVERTISING, DID YOU GIVE OF THE HEARING?

n/a

SUMMARY OF THE CONTENT OF THE LEGISLATIVE RULE, AND A DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE RULE'S PURPOSE AND ALL PROPOSED CHANGES TO THE RULE:

This legislative rule establishes general operating rules and procedures for the inspection of apiaries, control of bee diseases, and limitation of liability for beekeepers.

STATEMENT OF CIRCUMSTANCES WHICH REQUIRE THE RULE:

To establish procedures to inspect apiaries, to control bee diseases, and to limit liability for beekeepers.

SUMMARIZE IN A CLEAR AND CONCISE MANNER THE OVERALL ECONOMIC IMPACT OF THE PROPOSED LEGISLATIVE RULE:

A. ECONOMIC IMPACT ON REVENUES OF STATE GOVERNMENT:

n/a

B. ECONOMIC IMPACT ON SPECIAL REVENUE ACCOUNTS:

n/a

C. ECONOMIC IMPACT OF THE LEGISLATIVE RULE ON THE STATE OR ITS RESIDENTS:

n/a

D. FISCAL NOTE DETAIL:

Effect of Proposal	Fiscal Year		
	2026 Increase/Decrease (use "-")	2027 Increase/Decrease (use "-")	Fiscal Year (Upon Full Implementation)
1. Estimated Total Cost	0	0	0
Personal Services	0	0	0
Current Expenses	0	0	0
Repairs and Alterations	0	0	0
Assets	0	0	0
Other	0	0	0
2. Estimated Total Revenues	0	0	0

E. EXPLANATION OF ABOVE ESTIMATES (INCLUDING LONG-RANGE EFFECT):

n/a

BY CHOOSING 'YES', I ATTEST THAT THE PREVIOUS STATEMENT IS TRUE AND CORRECT.

Yes

Amie J Minor -- By my signature, I certify that I am the person authorized to file legislative rules, in accordance with West Virginia Code §29A-3-11 and §39A-3-2.

**TITLE 61
LEGISLATIVE RULE
WEST VIRGINIA DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE**

**SERIES 2
WEST VIRGINIA APIARY RULE**

§61-2-1. General.

1.1. Scope. -- This legislative rule establishes general operating rules and procedures for the inspection of apiaries, control of bee diseases, and limitation of liability for beekeepers.

1.2. Authority. -- W. Va. Code §19-13-3, §19-13-4

1.3. Filing Date. -- ~~April 24, 2023~~

1.4. Effective Date. -- ~~May 1, 2023~~

1.5. Sunset Date. -- This rule shall terminate and have no further force or effect on August 1, 2033.

§61-2-2. Definitions.

2.1. "Africanized Honey Bee (AHB)" means hybrids of the African Honey Bee with various European honey bees and which are far more aggressive than the European subspecies.

2.2. "Apiarist or beekeeper" means a person keeping bees.

2.3. "Apiculture or beekeeping" means the management of beehives.

2.4. "Bee Sting" means an injury sustained and inflicted by a worker honey bee.

2.5. "Beehive" means a removable framed housing for a honey bee colony.

2.6. "Caution sign" means a standardized sign with black print on yellow background for posting on or near an apiary as a precaution that honey bees are in the area.

2.7. "Drawn comb" means cells which have been drawn out into three dimensional hexagonal shapes using beeswax manufactured by honey bees and used to store resources or raise brood in a colony.

2.8. "Flight path" means the distinct route taken by many bees leaving from or returning to their hive.

2.9. "Honey extraction" means the removal of honey from combs.

2.10. "Honey flow" means the gathering of nectar from flora by honey bees.

2.11. "Honeycomb" means removable frames, containing wax cells which house honey, pollen, or brood (eggs, larvae, pupae).

2.12. "Inspector" means a West Virginia Department of Agriculture inspector or personnel who is authorized to conduct official inspections on behalf of the Department.

2.13. "Pollination" means the transfer of pollen by honey bees from anthers to stigmas of flowers for the purpose of plant fertilization.

2.14. "Queen" means an adult, mated female that lives in a honey bee colony or hive.

2.15. "Robbing" means bees attempting to access honey stored or spilled in another hive.

2.16. "Staging area" means a collection site for holding colonies prior to shipment.

2.17. "Swarm" means a cluster or flying mass of Honey Bees including workers, queen, and drones.

2.18. "Undeveloped property" means any idle land that has no structures or facilities intended for human use or occupancy. Property used exclusively for streets, highways, or commercial agriculture is to be considered undeveloped property for the purpose of the West Virginia Honey Bee Best Management Practices (HBBMP).

2.19. "Water supply" means any available source bees could use for water such as, but not limited to, water taps, hoses, pools, hot tubs, streams, ponds, puddles, etc.

§61-2-3. Registration of bees; Identification of apiaries.

3.1. The Commissioner shall furnish an application for registration of bees to all person known to keep bees. The Commissioner shall mail the applications during the month of June to all persons who have registered their bees during the previous year. Upon receipt of a properly executed bee registration application, the Commissioner shall issue a certificate of registration which will be based upon the information provided on the application.

3.2. All apiary certificates of registration expire on June 30 of each year, and shall be renewed annually. The Commissioner shall prepare renewal applications and make them available no later than June 1 of each year.

3.3. Any person who plans to import bees on drawn comb shall request a permit for entry from the Commissioner at least ten (10) days prior to the arrival of the bees. A valid certificate of inspection from the state of origin identifying any bee diseases that are affecting the bees and the extent of the bee diseases, if any, must accompany the request.

3.3.a. Any person who plans to import vacant used bee equipment into the state shall request a permit for entry from the Commissioner at least ten (10) days prior to the arrival of the bee

61CSR2

equipment. A valid certificate of the inspection from the state of origin identifying any bee diseases in the bees that were in the equipment, and stating that the treatment has been made, if any, to the vacated equipment shall accompany the request.

3.4. Any person who keeps bees and who has registered them is required to report to the Commissioner additional colonies obtained as packaged bees and any honey bee queens imported from any state, province or territory within 10 days of acquisition.

3.4.a. Any person who keeps bees and who has registered his or her bees who obtains additional colonies from capturing swarms, colony divisions or any other source from within this state, shall report the additional colonies to the Commissioner during the designated annual registration period.

§61-2-4. Limits on Liability.

4.1. A beekeeper may obtain limits on liability when he or she:

4.1.a. Signs a Honey Bee Best Management Practices compliance agreement to be kept on file at the West Virginia Department of Agriculture headquarters; and

4.1.b. Voluntarily conforms with Honey Bee Best Management Practices contained in subsection 4.2. of this rule.

4.2. West Virginia Honey Bee Best Management Practices (HBBMP) are as follows:

4.2.a. West Virginia Beekeepers shall post a honey bee caution sign in or near the apiary.

4.2.b. West Virginia Beekeepers shall limit the number of hives in relation to property lot size in accordance with the following:

4.2.b.1. Less than ~~1/2~~ 1/8 acre – ~~4~~ 2 colonies (~~1/2 1/8~~ 1/8 acre = ~~21,780~~ 5,545 sq. ft., roughly ~~100~~ 50 ft. x ~~218~~ 109 ft.)

4.2.b.2. More than 1/2 acre, less than 1 acre – 6 colonies (1 acre = 43,560 sq. ft., roughly 150 ft. x 290 ft.); ~~and~~

4.2.b.3. 1 acre or more – 8 colonies (1 acre = 43,560 sq. ft., roughly 150 ft. x 290 ft.); and

4.2.b.4. Upon obtaining written agreement from the owner(s) of contiguous property(ies), a beekeeper may include the acreage of such property(ies) in calculating total property size under Section 4.2.b. The maximum number of colonies permitted shall be based on the total acreage of the combined contiguous properties. This agreement does not exempt beekeepers from property line requirements outlined in 4.2.c. or 4.2.d.

4.2.c. Regardless of lot size: If all hives are situated at least 200 feet in any direction from all property lines of the lot on which the apiary is situated, or as long as all ~~adjoining~~ contiguous

61CSR2

property(ies) that fall(s) within a 200-foot radius of any hive is undeveloped property, there ~~are~~ is no limit on the number of hives.

4.2.d. West Virginia beekeepers:

4.2.d.1. Shall have hive entrances face away from neighboring property and in such a direction that bees fly across the beekeeper's property a sufficient distance to gain a height of six feet. If ~~contiguous bordering~~ property is within a distance of 50 feet, the beekeeper shall use barriers (e.g., dense hedges, shrubs, or solid fencing) at least six feet high} to redirect the bees' flight pathway and establish bee flight pathways above head height;

4.2.d.2. Shall maintain a water source near the colonies at a distance less than the nearest unnatural water supply;

4.2.d.3. Shall not keep an apiary within 50 feet of an established animal that is tethered, kenneled or otherwise prevented from escaping a stinging incident;

4.2.d.4. Should avoid opening colonies for inspection or manipulation when neighbors are present or in the immediate vicinity-~~z~~

4.2.d.5. Should avoid purchasing queens and honey bees from areas that are documented as having been designated as an established Africanized Honey Bee (AHB) zone;

4.2.d.6. Shall manage all colonies to minimize swarming; and

4.2.d.7. Shall replace queens in colonies exhibiting defensive behavior that may be injurious to the general public or domesticated animals as determined by Department's apiary staff.

4.2.e. A collection site for holding colonies prior to shipment, or a staging area, shall have undeveloped property surrounded by a natural barrier and shall be marked with a honey bee caution sign.

4.2.f. Anyone transporting colonies shall secure the load and screen entrances or place a net over the colonies to prevent bees from escaping.

4.2.g. West Virginia Beekeepers shall properly discard all pesticides and other control agents after use according to label directions.

4.2.h. Honey Bees used for public demonstrations, entertainment or educational purposes shall be enclosed so as to avoid the release of honey bees to the public.

4.2.i. In the event~~u~~ that Africanized Honey Bee (AHB) infestation is determined to be established in West Virginia by the Department, additional rules promulgated by the Commissioner of Agriculture will be followed.

§61-2-5. Right of entry; Apiary inspections; Quarantines.

61CSR2

5.1. An inspector shall inspect a colony of bees by removing three (3) or more frames containing developing brood from the hive and examining both sides for evidence of bee disease.

5.2. A person shall not keep or maintain bees in any hive or receptacle which does not permit the thorough examination of the brood combs.

5.2.a. Whenever and wherever an inspector finds that the inspection of bees is impossible due to the keeping of bees in hives or other receptacles not equipped to permit the examination of brood combs, the inspector shall inform the beekeeper in writing of the condition, provided that no transmissible bee disease is found in the environs of the hives or other receptacles. The beekeeper has twelve (12) months from the initial date of notification to correct the condition. Whenever or wherever these conditions are not corrected within 12 months from the date of notification of the beekeeper, the Commissioner shall quarantine the colonies until the condition is corrected.

5.2.b. If a transmissible bee disease is confirmed by laboratory analysis in the Department's laboratory or by the United States Department of Agriculture – Agricultural Research Service in the environs of an apiary equipped with hives or receptacles which do not permit the thorough examination of the brood combs, the colonies contained in the hives or receptacles shall be considered affected with the confirmed bee diseases and shall be destroyed or sterilized. In order to protect the beekeeping industry, the Commissioner shall require immediate destruction of the hives or receptacles.

5.3. After inspecting or handling any disease infected bee equipment or appliances, and before proceeding to any other apiary, the inspector and every assistant, whether a beekeeper or inspector, shall thoroughly disinfect and/or de-contaminate every portion of their person and clothing, and any appliances that may have been in contact with infected materials.

5.4. The Commissioner shall quarantine all apiaries that are confirmed by laboratory analysis in the Department's laboratory or by the United States Department of Agriculture – Agricultural Research Service as infected with a transmissible bee disease. The inspector will submit to the apiary owner, or person in charge of the apiary, a written document stating the nature of the disease and a statement whether the disease may be successfully treated or not. In addition, the inspector shall include in the document recommendations for treatment, if any, and a statement of policy. Upon receipt of the documents, the apiary owner, or person in charge, shall, by signed agreement, willingly acknowledge and accept full responsibility for compliance with the quarantine and the treatment. The apiary owner shall treat, or cause to treat the quarantined colonies as soon as possible, but no later than fourteen days from the notification.

5.4.a. If the incidence of the bee disease is such that, in the judgment of the inspector, chemical control treatment may be successful, the apiary owner shall treat the affected colonies, as prescribed by the inspector.

5.4.b. If the incidence of the bee disease is such that, in the judgment of the inspector, no treatment may be successful, as in the case of infection with American foulbrood, then the inspector shall notify the apiary owner that the affected colonies must be destroyed. The inspector shall be present during the destruction of the colonies and destruction or sterilization of the bee equipment.

61CSR2

5.5. The apiary owner may sterilize, at his or her own expense and by any appropriate method specified by the inspector and approved by the commissioner, any vacant bee equipment that may have been directly or indirectly exposed to contagious bee disease. Any equipment not so sterilized must be destroyed.

5.6. The Commissioner shall not quarantine any colonies confirmed infected with any non-transmissible parasitic infestation or bee disease. The apiary owner shall, however, be encouraged to treat the colonies according to the written specifications provided by the inspector.

5.7. The Commissioner shall not bring additional regulatory action against any apiary owner who is complying or attempting to comply with the terms of quarantine.

5.8. The Commissioner shall review any violation of a quarantine and, depending upon the severity of the violation, shall assess other penalties as provided by West Virginia Code §19-13-1 et seq.