

1991 Oregon Pollination Survey

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For the past six years a pollination survey has been sent from the Honey Bee Laboratory at OSU to all Oregon beekeepers who register more than 25 colonies with the Oregon Department of Agriculture. The survey requests information on the number of colonies rented, rental crops, and rental fees. More than 200 beekeepers receive the survey each year. Approximately 30 percent of the surveys were returned for 1991. The return rate for commercial beekeepers (owning more than 300 colonies per operation) is around 50 percent. This year the total number of colonies registered by those participating in the survey was 18,854 hives. These represent a total of 30,000 reported pollination rentals.

This information has been very valuable in developing an understanding of the economics of honey bee pollination rental and the dependence by Oregon's larger agricultural economy on the beekeeping industry. The latest in-

formation for the 1991 pollination season is summarized in Table 1.

Once again the dominating rental crops are tree fruit. This should not be unexpected as Oregon currently has some 38,500 acres planted in apples (10,500 a), pears (16,900 a) and sweet cherries (11,290 a). Beekeepers responding to the 1991 survey were responsible for renting 13,377 colonies for tree fruit pollination, with an average rental fee of \$20 per colony.

The crop with the highest average rental fee (\$25.15), was once again vegetable seed, primarily onions and carrots. As much of this acreage is in hybrid seed, it requires a high colony density and the high value of the seed crop allows growers to invest more in pollination costs.

Table 2 shows the average pollination fee for the past six years. The average pollination rental fee for 1991 was \$19.45. This is a 6 percent increase from the \$18.40 average fee for 1990. It is a 20 percent increase from the \$16.15 fee of five years ago (1987). The total pollination income generated from the 60 bee-

keepers returning the surveys was \$481,046!!! Commercial beekeepers owned 85 percent of the colonies involved in the survey, therefore we can compute that the average pollination income for each commercial beekeeper was \$27,130!!! Based on additional survey data we find that once again pollination income is responsible for more than 60 percent of a commercial beekeeper's annual gross income.

Many acres of a number of commodities are still receiving "free" pollination from Oregon beekeepers. This is not unexpected in crimson clover and hairy vetch which are viewed (rightly or wrongly) by beekeepers as honey crops as opposed to outright pollination rentals. Even so, we still see significant free pollination in tree fruit, red clover, berries and radish seed.

I wish to thank all the beekeepers who took the time to complete the surveys. I encourage all beekeepers who receive the survey, even if they are not involved in pollination rental, to take the time to fill it out and return it.

1991 POLLINATION SURVEY - SUMMARY

CROP	Hives	hi-low fee	avg fee	n
Pears	4,896	27/12	\$21.70	18
Sweet cherry	5,395	23/12	20.30	25
Apples	3,086	25/0	19.00	16
Vegetable seed	3,961	29/15	25.15	11
Red clover	2,192	20/0	11.20	10
White clover	250	(25)	(25.00)	1
Crimson clover	4,326	10/0	0.03	13
Vetch	960	-0-	-0-	4
Berries	2,151	24/0	11.95	15
Cucumbers	433	25/17	19.40	5
Blueberries	809	24/0	16.15	12
Radish seed	644	26/0	17.00	8
Minor crops ¹	885	25/0	20.40	11
Totals	30,008 rentals		19.45 ² average fee	

¹ Includes arrowleaf clover, holly, squash & pumpkins and melons

² Excludes crimson clover and vetch which are really honey crops, not pollination rentals.

Total rental income by responding beekeepers = \$481,046

Survey Response

Total of 60 beekeepers returned survey forms.

15 Commercial (>300 hives) owning 15,975 colonies
38 Sideliners (<300 hives) owning 2,772 colonies
7 Hobbyists (<25 hives) owning 107 colonies

18,854 colonies
in survey

Table 2. Average colony pollination fee in Oregon 1986 - 1991

	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991
Avg. Fee	\$14.75	16.15	17.50	16.05	18.40	19.45