

1992 Oregon Pollination Survey

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For the seventh year the OSU Honey Bee Laboratory has conducted a survey of Oregon beekeepers concerning pollination rental. The survey form was sent to all 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. This year 33 surveys were returned. The return rate for commercial beekeepers was 36%. For 1992 the total number of colonies registered by those participating in the survey was 15,114. These colonies represent a total of 37,942 rentals on 18 different crops with a total rental income of \$730,390!!! The 1992 data show that commercial bee operations (defined as owning more than 300 colonies) were responsible for 94% of all reported pollination rentals (35,527 out of 37,942 rentals).

Again tree fruits (pears, sweet cherries and apples) dominate the pollination rental situation with 52% of all colony rentals and 58% of the total rental income. Pears alone accounted for 28% of all reported rentals, and 31% of reported rental income. The average colony rental fee for these three crops was \$21.60. Cranberries had the highest average rental per colony at \$28.80. Vegetable seed pollination, primarily carrots and onions, resulted in an average rental fee of \$28.50. The average fee in 1992 for all crops was \$19.25, which is down 1% from the 1991 average of \$19.45 (see Table 2).

For the commercial beekeeper each colony was rented an average of 2.6 times during the 1992 pollinating season. This represents a gross pollination income of \$49.60 per colony. The sideliner (<300 colonies) had an average of 1.8 rentals per colony, for an income of \$34.25 per hive. The average size of a commercial operation was 765 colonies and for the sideliner, 91 hives.

Pollination rental income accounted for 66% of total gross income for the average Oregon commercial beekeeper. For the sideliner involved in pollination, 71% of gross income was generated by colony rentals.

In spite of relatively high winter losses in 1991-92 (Oregon average of 21%), no shortages of colonies for pollination rental were reported. However, the preliminary data for the winter losses for 1992-93 show an exceptionally high loss, which has caused serious economic hardship for beekeepers involved in pollination in 1993.

I wish to thank all those beekeepers who continue to take the time and effort to return the survey forms. The information gained is of value to anyone who is involved in the rental of honey bee colonies.

CROP	# Hives	hi-low fee	avg. fee	# beekeepers responding
Pear	10,683	\$30/12	\$21.20	21
Sweet Cherry	6,645	24/16	21.60	18
Apple	2,230	28/14	23.50	9
Berry ¹	2,834	18/10	12.20	14
Vegetable Seed	4,813	35/14	28.50	13
Clover Seed ²	3,413	28/0	11.90	9
Crimson & Vetch	3,170	-0-	-0-	9
Radish Seed	720	28/15	20.00	8
Cranberry	1,230	30/28	28.80	2
Blueberry	1,042	26/12	17.60	13
Cucumber	206	30/20	22.90	4
Squash & Pump.	546	30/20	22.95	7
Misc. ³	410	25/15	23.95	4
Totals	37,942 rentals		\$19.25 average fee	

¹Includes blackberries, raspberries, Marion- and Loganberries.
²Includes red, white and arrow leaf clover. Crimson and vetch used as honey plants and rental is rarely charged.
³Includes watermelon, gooseberry, apricot and kiwi
 Total rental income by responding beekeepers = \$730,390

1986	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991	1992
\$14.75	16.15	17.50	16.05	18.40	19.45	19.25

Survey Review

A total of 33 beekeepers returned survey forms:
 18 Commercial (>300 hives) owning 13,754 colonies
 15 Sideliners (<300 hives) owning 1,360 colonies

The average commercial beekeeper rented each colony 2.6 times during 1992, for an average per hive pollination rental income of \$49.70.

The average sideliner beekeeper rented each colony 1.8 times during 1992, for an average per hive pollination rental income of \$34.25.

The average commercial bee operation maintained 765 colonies and grossed \$37,993 in pollination rental income for 1992.

The average sideliner bee operation maintained 91 colonies and grossed \$3,153 in pollination rental income for 1992.