

FIELDWATCH & THE IOWA BEE RULE

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

FieldWatch™, Inc. registries will help protect honey bees from exposure to chemicals that are toxic to bees. Registered locations of beehives enable applicators to locate and minimize exposure to applied pesticides. Iowa employs FieldWatch™ registries, including BeeCheck™ for managed honey bees, as the Iowa Sensitive Crops Registry platform.

Effective January 22, 2009, the Department adopted an amended “Pesticide/Bee Rule” of the Iowa Administrative Code Chapter 21-45.31(206). The Rule reads:

45.31(1) Owners of apiaries, in order to protect their bees from pesticide applications, shall register the location of their apiaries with the state apiarist. Registration shall be on forms provided by the department. The registration expires December 31 each year and may be renewed the following year.

45.31(2) Between 8 a.m. and 6 p.m., a commercial applicator shall not apply to blooming crops pesticides labeled as toxic to bees when the commercial applicator is located within one mile of a registered apiary. A commercial applicator shall be responsible for maintaining the one-mile distance from apiaries that are registered and listed on the sensitive crop registry on the first day of each month.

ARE MY HIVES PROTECTED IF I DON'T REGISTER?

Honey bee registry is voluntary in Iowa. If hives are not registered the prohibition of pesticide application of a product with a bee warning on the label, by a commercial pesticide applicator, to blooming crops within one mile of hives, between the hours of 8 am and 6 pm, does *not* apply to the unregistered hives. However, FIFRA label laws still apply to the pesticide application.

DO I HAVE TO REGISTER MY HIVES ANNUALLY?

It depends:

- Entries made after July 1 are automatically valid through the succeeding year. For example, an entry made on July 15th, 2023, is valid through May 1, 2025.
- Registry entries made prior to July 1 must be renewed annually. You may view registry entries from the previous year until May 1 of the next year. FieldWatch sends out email and postcard reminders that it is time to renew, entries not renewed will not be displayed after May 1st.

CAN I REGISTER MY HIVES AT ANY TIME; WHAT IS THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE FIRST DAY OF EACH MONTH?

Beekeepers can add their apiary locations to the Sensitive Crops Registry at any time. The Bee Rule then applies to all apiaries listed on the Iowa BeeCheck™ on the first day of following month.

WHY RESTRICT CERTAIN PESTICIDE APPLICATIONS WITHIN ONE MILE OF REGISTERED HIVES?

Bees can fly up to about five miles. Many beekeepers preferred a more conservative two-mile radius, the Bee Rule is a compromise. When there is good forage for bees (April through August), studies have shown the average foraging distance of adult bees is between 1/2 and 3/4 of a mile. This average expands to 1 1/3 miles in times of dearth. To halt application of insecticides labeled as toxic to bees between 8AM and 6PM, a compromise was made to the one-mile radius in the Bee Rule updated in 2009.

FIELDWATCH & THE IOWA BEE RULE

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

▶ DOES THE BEE RULE STOP ALL PESTICIDE APPLICATIONS NEAR MY HIVES?

No. Pesticides that do not have a bee warning on the label are not restricted by the Iowa Bee Rule, application may continue according to the label. The Bee Rule only impacts:

- a) Pesticides (usually insecticides) that have a “bee warning” on the label when –
- b) Applied by a commercial pesticide applicator who is –
- c) Applying the pesticide to blooming crops that are –
- d) Within one mile radius of hives that actively registered (the hives were registered and became active on the first of the following month) and
- e) The application cannot occur between 8 a.m. – 6 p.m., during the most active bee foraging hours of the day.

▶ WILL I BE CONTACTED BEFORE A PESTICIDE APPLICATION OCCURS WITHIN A MILE OF MY REGISTERED BEEHIVES?

From 1979 to 2008 commercial pesticide applicators were required to contact the owners of registered hives prior to application. In 2009 the Iowa Bee Rule was amended, eliminating the contact requirement, and added the application restriction between the hours of 8 a.m. to 6 p.m. The updated rule language rule is the direct result of meetings held between state government, university, Iowa Honey Producers Association board members, ag chemical applicators, and beekeepers.

Methods of contact, phone numbers for emergency situations, and even public offices originally written into the language of the original rule have changed, and some even disappeared entirely; how people communicated in 1979 is vastly different than today. Additionally, beekeepers commonly don't know what to do once notified of pending application of insecticides labeled as toxic to bees in their area. Beekeepers often felt it better to do nothing at all rather than move the bees to an unprotected area or confine them inside the hives in the heat of the summer. There is no completely correct action to implement when a nearby application of insecticides labeled as toxic to bees occurs. Applicators felt that they were subject to added responsibility for little-to-no benefit to bees nor beekeepers. Accidental bee kills over the years made the communication situation worse between parties. And, the apiary registry only contained a fraction of the bee yards in the state at the time of the rule change. In short, real change was necessary to better protect managed pollinators in Iowa.

▶ QUESTIONS

- Iowa Sensitive Crop Registry <https://iowaagriculture.gov/SensitiveCropRegistry>, Phone: (515) 281-8503
- State Apiarist, Andrew Joseph, Phone: (515) 326-5765
- Agricultural Diversification & Market Development Bureau, Paul Ovrom, Phone (515) 242-6239

DISCLAIMER: The information in this document is for general informational purposes only and is not intended to provide legal or other advice to any individual or entity. Nothing contained herein is specific to any individual, entity, or premises. This document does not provide permission, authorization, or approval in any manner for any action or activity. Restocking a premises or releasing a control area may be subject to federal, state, or other legal authorities that are not specifically identified herein.