



# Bees Please



Honeybees are among the most fascinating creatures on Earth, and West Virginia is a great place for them to make honey. More than 1,000 men and women are registered with the WVDA as beekeepers, or “apiarists.” They maintain in excess of 12,000 colonies, commonly referred to as hives.

West Virginia’s bees commonly feed on tree flowers, and the state is known for producing a wide variety of richly flavored honey not found in other states. Plus, bees don’t need to drive tractors, so flat ground isn’t important to them!

Although other pollinators exist, honeybees are the best and are critically important to agricultural yields world-



wide. It’s estimated that honeybees are responsible for one out of every three bites of food you take.

But their health is threatened on numerous fronts. Colony Collapse Disorder (CCD) is a mysterious ailment where bees simply disappear from their hives, never to be seen again. Scientists think there’s likely a combination of causes involved with CCD. However, diseases and parasite problems are already well-documented and just as problematic.

In fact, bees are under such an assault that it is highly unlikely you’ll find a wild honeybee. Human management is essential to their continued survival.

Workers are the only bees that most people ever see. These bees are females that forage for pollen and nectar and build, clean, and protect the hive.

The queen lays the eggs that will become the hive's next generation of bees – up to 1,500 a day. If the queen dies, workers will create a new queen by feeding one of the worker females a special diet of “royal jelly,” enabling the worker to develop into a fertile queen.

Male bees are called drones. Their only function is to mate with the queen. Several hundred drones live in each hive during the spring and summer, but they are expelled for the winter months when the hive goes into a lean survival mode.

## Bee Facts

- Bees live on stored honey and pollen all winter, and they cluster into a ball to conserve warmth. In the summer, they beat their wings to ventilate the hive.
- Honeybees beat their wings 200 times a second and can fly at up to 15 miles per hour.
- The average worker produces about 1/12th of a teaspoon of honey in her lifetime, but a typical colony contains around 25,000 bees at any given time.
- It takes about 45,000 miles of flight to make one pound of honey