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# WHAT FLORIDA'S HONEY BEE LAW MEANS FOR YOU

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## THE BACKYARD BEEKEEPER

Introducing Florida Statute Ch. 586  
The Florida Honey Certification and  
Honey Bee Law  
and  
The Beekeeper Compliance  
Agreement



*Photo credit: A. Mortensen*

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Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences

Florida Department of Agriculture and  
Consumer Services,  
Division of Plant Industry  
Bureau of Plant & Apiary Inspection

University of South Florida  
Botanical Garden



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# STATE RESOURCES

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Florida Department of Agriculture and  
Consumer Services  
Division of Plant Industry  
Bureau of Plant and Apiary Inspection

[www.FreshFromFlorida.com](http://www.FreshFromFlorida.com)

search 'Apiary'

beekeeper registration

locate your apiary inspector

search 'beekeeper compliance'

read the full agreement

Florida Bee Protection

[www.floridabeeprotection.org](http://www.floridabeeprotection.org)

pollinator protection information for  
growers and beekeepers

F.S. Chapter 586, the Honey Bee Law  
[flsenate.gov/Laws/Statutes/2013/Chapter586](http://flsenate.gov/Laws/Statutes/2013/Chapter586)

DPI Helpline 1-888-397-1517





Beekeepers should inspect their colonies at least once a month. *Photo Credit: Brent Weisman*

## YOU, THE BEEKEEPER

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As a small-scale beekeeper, you play a valuable and critical role in fighting honey bee colony decline. Managed honey bee colony losses from introduced pests and diseases, pesticide poisoning, and stress caused by lack of forage are not

uncommon these days. You may have only a few colonies, but they can help maintain the genetic diversity needed for healthy honey bee populations in the future. You are keeping bees of gentle European ancestry which help combat the spread of the more defensive Africanized bees.

You, the backyard beekeeper, through your dedication and allegiance to the industry help define Florida beekeeping. Florida's Honey Bee Law and FDACS help us to manage and protect this valuable resource.





# INTRODUCTION



Honey bees bring many benefits to our lives. Honey bees pollinate many of the plants that we depend on for food and are critical in Florida agriculture. They also pollinate wild trees and flowering plants that provide food for wildlife and beautify our landscape. Honey bees make honey from plant nectar, produce wax used for candles and cosmetics and are no doubt valuable to our culture. The hobbyist and sideliner beekeeper sector in Florida has grown tremendously. That, in combination with colony loss challenges facing beekeepers, helped align the Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services (FDACS) with the Florida State Beekeeper's Association (FSBA) to propose and promote new policies that would encourage and support backyard beekeeping.

This collaboration resulted in Florida Statute Ch. 586, Florida's Honey Bee Law.

## INTERPRETATION: LEGISLATIVE INTENT

F.S. Ch. 586, the Honey Bee Law, gives FDACS the responsibility for regulating beekeeping and honey certification in the state of Florida. The law requires Florida beekeepers to register their colonies with FDACS and requires yearly colony inspection by an FDACS apiary inspector. F.S. Ch. 586.10 also gives FDACS the authority to preempt local ordinances prohibiting beekeeping except for those adopted by homeowner's associations (HOA) or in deed restrictions. This means that you can legally keep bees on non-agricultural private land, such as your home — except where stated in a HOA or property deed, and on public lands, such as state parks — only with written permission.

### Definitions

Chapter 586 gives legal definitions for a number of terms, including

- **apiary:** a bee yard or site where honey bee hives, honey bees, or honey bee equipment is located
- **apiculture:** the raising, caring for, and breeding of honeybees
- **colony:** a distinguishable localized population in which one or more life stages may be present
- **honey:** the natural food product resulting from the harvest of nectar or honeydew by honey bees and the natural activities of the honey bees in processing nectar or honeydew
- **certified honey:** honey that is sampled, analyzed, and certified by the department to be primarily of one type of principal nectar source

## INTERPRETATION: THE BEEKEEPER COMPLIANCE AGREEMENT

The rules and regulations pertaining to keeping honey bee colonies on private non-agricultural land are published in Rule 5B-54.0105 of the Florida Administrative Code. This rule is known as the Beekeeper Compliance Agreement. The agreement stipulates that Best Management Requirements (BMRs) for "Maintaining European Honey Bee Colonies" must be followed and is to be signed by the beekeeper and FDACS/DPI Apiary Inspection. The BMR specifies the requirements for maintaining an apiary and minimal practices for managing honey bee colonies such as performing monthly inspections, swarm management, provision of water, re-queening, and outlines the number of hives allowed per acre. Properties of one quarter acre or less in size are limited to three permanent colonies.

### HIGHLIGHT: 5B-54.019 Procedures for Abandoned Apiaries

All beekeeping equipment used to house honey bees should be clearly identified; e.g. hive bodies marked with valid owner name, contact, and/or registration information. This is of utmost importance and FDACS has set forth procedures in this rule to deal with abandoned apiaries and unmarked apiaries placed without permission.

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# BEEKEEPING RESOURCES

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Florida State Beekeeper's Association  
[www.floridabeekeepers.org](http://www.floridabeekeepers.org)

local association directory, fall and spring  
conference, legislative actions

University of Florida Honey Bee  
Research and Extension Laboratory  
[www.UFhoneybee.com](http://www.UFhoneybee.com)

newsletter, extension events,  
Florida Master Beekeeper Program

Eastern Apicultural Society  
[www.easternapiculture.com](http://www.easternapiculture.com)

newsletter, annual meeting,  
EAS Master Beekeeper Program

University of South Florida Botanical Garden  
[www.gardens.usf.edu](http://www.gardens.usf.edu)



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