

TO: Ways and Means Committee
FROM: Diane Bothfeld - Deputy Secretary for Dairy Policy and Director of Administrative Services IV
DATE: January 14, 2014
REASON: Testimony on Fee Bill – Apiary Fee

Proposal as Agreed Upon by Agency of Ag and VT Beekeepers Association

The Agency of Agriculture met with representatives of the Beekeepers Association on June 10, 2013. The importance of the apiary industry in VT was discussed from the backyard hobbyists to the commercial businesses. Beekeepers in VT have been seeing losses their bees and livelihoods due to disease, bee losses, changes in crops and crop failures and bears. The Beekeepers Association has been discussing the need for more focus on the bee health and the apiary industry. Important areas of interest – Disease, sales of nuclei being disease free of serious disease, hobby beekeepers understanding disease risk, training for state employee by national organization to remain up to date on bee disease and other issues. The group worked toward a solution to cover the costs of the Agency of Ag and to enhance inspection and surveillance to improve the overall health.

Here is the draft proposal:

1. Registration fee of \$10/year/ location of hives
 - a. For example – backyard hobbyist with one location- \$10 per year
 - b. Commercial hive owner with 5 locations - \$50 per year
2. Estimated total collected by the Agency of Ag per year
 - a. \$20,000
3. Projected use of the funds
 - a. \$9,500 for the agency to manage the registration program and expenses of Employee (travel and salary)
 - i. Employee currently devotes 35% of time per year to apiary industry
 - ii. With potential retirement of current employee, Agency training a second employee.
 - b. Remaining funds granted to Beekeepers Association - estimated \$11,000
 - i. Funds to be used for Part time person to provide surveillance of hives and apiary businesses in summer
 - ii. Surveillance information provided to Agency of Ag Employee to determine if any follow-up is needed
 1. State law does provide for a penalty if aspects of the statute have been violated
 2. If concerns, then state employee would need to follow-up
 - iii. Funds used to support mentoring program for hobbyist beekeepers