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2/1/2011

LATE

HB 806

SB 738

proposes to require beekeepers to register honeybee colonies with the department of agriculture.

Opposition:

1. Requiring beekeepers to register hives every three years does not and will not portray an accurate picture of the health of the industry:

- a. Beekeepers throughout the world experience normal hive losses due to queen failures. Industry figures cite losses of 0 to 25% per year as normal.
- b. Beekeepers replace lost hives through hive splits, swarm catches and feral hive relocation so the end of year total may be unchanged although hives were lost.
- c. Registering hives without accounting for losses and additions only indicates the number of colonies at that instance in time.
- d. A three year period does not allow any reactive or proactive actions to be put into effect in time to benefit the beekeepers. Varroa has been present on Oahu for at least 3 years and the number of colonies, based on hearsay, is the same, if not more, than 2007. By the time the legislature acquires new numbers in 2013, many beekeepers may have ceased operation.
- e. Merely recording the number of colonies does not provide any meaningful information as to why changes in numbers may be present. Weather conditions on Oahu are different in Waimanalo than in Waianae. Weather not only affects the hives, but affects honey production. Beekeeping management practices vary widely and some beekeepers will lose more and gain less than others. Some beekeepers will lose hives to pesticide kills on farmlands or due to neighbor activities. Hives will swarm and the remaining portion may not have viable queens.

→ 2. Soliciting information voluntarily is just as, if not more, effective than enacting laws:

- a. When PQB began sampling hives for varroa, Oahu beekeepers supported and assisted in the effort without requiring legislation.
- b. In some cases, beekeepers purchased alcohol and containers out of pocket, sampled hives and provided these to the state, again voluntarily.

3. Information appears to be one way – beekeepers to department of agriculture:

- a. Other than an initial map of varroa infestation, little has been released as to the varroa condition on Oahu and the Big Island. Most information obtained by beekeepers is through the coconut telegraph or UH Manoa.

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- b. Other than the initial press release for the Small Hive Beetle on the Big Island, the department of agriculture has not released any information as to the spread of this pest. The University of Hawaii Manoa informed us of the Small Hive Beetle presence on Oahu, not the department of agriculture.
 - c. The University of Hawaii at Manoa has been far more supportive in assisting Oahu beekeepers in managing varroa as well as preparing us for the onslaught of Small Hive Beetle.
 - d. Collecting information with no dissemination to beekeepers provides no immediate benefit to a beekeeper and any attempts to muddy data to protect confidential information will be fruitless. Queen rearing companies are most likely very familiar with each other's operations. If it is reported that hives were lost in Kunia, we all know who has bees where and can derived how each of us may be doing. Hoarding data, hiding the fact that the adjacent beekeeper has lost 50% of his/her colonies puts the other beekeeper's operation at risk (case in point – SHB losses in Kunia have not been reported and as a result has placed beekeeping operations in Ewa at risk.)
- 4. Registering hives does nothing to monitor the number or health of feral colonies.
- a. Feral colonies were responsible for more than 50% of pollination pre-varroa.
 - b. Feral colonies are on the increase with significant swarming activities in Waihiawa and Waimanalo in 2010. Feral colony increases are occurring with no assistance from man.
- 5. Not all beekeepers will comply with this legislation and therefore an accurate picture will be available:
- a. There are many people on Oahu that have one or two colonies that do not belong to either HBA or the Hawaiian Honey Bee Coop.
 - b. There are beekeepers that have indicated that they will not cooperate if laws are enacted.
 - c. There are beekeepers that will misreport the number of colonies to present larger loss in hopes of compensation under crop loss insurances.

In summary, collecting data on honeybee colonies can be done by administrative policies within the department of agriculture without requiring laws to be enacted. A voluntary program will be more effective with more cooperation from the beekeepers of Hawaii whereas enacting legislation may drive some beekeepers underground. The University of Hawaii Manoa

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has worked with Oahu beekeepers in a positive, fruitful relationship and would be the best candidates for acquiring and disseminating information.