



**VIRGINIA DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE AND CONSUMER SERVICES
DIVISION OF CONSUMER PROTECTION
OFFICE OF PLANT INDUSTRY SERVICES**

GUIDANCE DOCUMENT

Document number: OPIS 2020-01
Subject: Beehive Distribution Program
Effective date: July 31, 2020
Expiration date: In effect until otherwise rescinded

PURPOSE

To establish guidelines and requirements for qualification under the Beehive Distribution Program.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- The Beehive Grant Fund (Fund) was created to promote the establishment of new beehives in the Commonwealth. The 2018 Session of the General Assembly replaced the Beehive Grant Program with the Beehive Distribution Program (Chapter 192 of Acts of Assembly). The Beehive Grant Program reimbursed beekeepers for expenses related to the purchase of beehive equipment whereas the Beehive Distribution Program (Program) provides beehive equipment directly to beekeepers.
- The 2020 Session of the General Assembly revised the Beehive Distribution Program (Chapter 407 of Acts of Assembly) to require the Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services (Department) to accept applications for beehive units for a period of not less than 15 days and the Department must select individuals receiving beehive units at random from the eligible applications received during the application period. In addition, the General Assembly established a limit of three beehive units that can be distributed to a household in each fiscal year.

ELIGIBILITY

- Only individuals are eligible to receive beehive units. Entities such as businesses, non-profit organizations, government agencies, etc. are not eligible to receive beehive units through the Program.

- Only residents of the Commonwealth of Virginia who are 18 years of age or older at the time the application is submitted are eligible to receive beehive units.
- Multiple individuals with the same mailing and/or physical address (household) may apply to the Program. Distribution of beehive units will be limited to no more than three (3) basic beehive units per household in the same fiscal year (July 1 - June 30).
- Individuals who receive beehive units through the Program will be registered as a beekeeper with the Department.
- Individuals who are awarded units may be required to complete a Commonwealth of Virginia Substitute W-9 form, prior to receiving the beehive units.

DISTRIBUTION PROCEDURES

- The Department will randomly select the individuals to receive beehive units from eligible applications submitted during the application period. Only complete applications will be considered eligible.
- Distribution of beehive units is contingent upon funding appropriated for the Program in the annual state budget.
- Individuals will not be eligible to receive beehive units in consecutive years until all individuals who (i) submitted an application the current year and (ii) did not receive beehive units the previous year are approved by the Department to receive beehive units.
- If funds are exhausted for the fiscal year, the Department will notify applicants who submitted an application but were not selected to receive beehive units.
- Applications from individuals who do not receive beehive units will not be carried forward to the next fiscal year.

BEEHIVE UNIT REQUIREMENTS

- New beehives provided to individuals through this Program shall remain in the Commonwealth of Virginia.
- A beehive unit shall consist of two deep Langstroth style hive boxes or a hive of equivalent capacity that has movable frames with combs or foundation that cause the bees to construct brood combs and that may be removed from the hive without injuring other combs.

- A basic beehive unit shall include the following items:
 - Hive box or boxes with capacity for no less than 16 frames;
 - Frames for the hive box(es);
 - Foundation or similar guide for drawing comb for frames for the hive box(es);
 - Bottom board;
 - Inner cover for a Langstroth hive unit; and
 - Outer cover.

- The Department shall distribute the following styles of beehive units:
 - Eight frame Langstroth medium brood box hive;
 - Eight frame Langstroth deep brood box hive;
 - Ten frame Langstroth medium brood box hive;
 - Ten frame Langstroth deep brood box hive; or
 - Top bar hive.

- Beehive units must be used to establish a new beehive with a viable colony of honey bees within one (1) year of the date the items are received by an individual.

- Individuals receiving beehive units through the Program must comply with all federal, state and local laws, ordinances and requirements related to beehive management and beekeeping activities. A copy of the Virginia Bee Law (Va Code § 3.2-4400 *et seq.*) may be found at <https://law.lis.virginia.gov/vacode/title3.2/chapter44/>. Applicants should contact the locality in which the beehive(s) will be located to ensure compliance with all applicable ordinances.

APPLICATION PROCESS

Applications can be submitted using the Department’s online Beehive Distribution Program system or by postal mail during the application period. Applications should include a valid email address.

- Applications may be submitted electronically to the Department utilizing the online application system at <https://www.vdacs.virginia.gov/plant-industry-services-beehive-distribution-program.shtml>; or
- Applications may be submitted by postal mail. To request an application, contact the Office of Plant Industry Services at (804) 786-3515 or VABees@vdacs.virginia.gov. The Department will only consider applications postmarked during the application period. The address for mailing applications is:

VDACS
Office of Plant Industry Services
Beehive Distribution Program
P.O. Box 1163
Richmond, VA 23218

COMPLIANCE

The Department reserves the right to inquire into the legitimacy of any application, as well as the right to inspect any bee colony established in a beehive unit received as part of the Program. A colony shall consist of a laying queen, brood, and at least 10 frames of adult bees. The hive should contain honey and pollen in amounts sufficient to sustain the colony into the following year.

BEECHECK

BeeCheck™ is a voluntary online communication tool that allows beekeepers and pesticide applicators to work together to protect apiaries through the use of the BeeCheck™ mapping program. Participants in the Program and other beekeepers are encouraged to enter their apiary location(s) on the BeeCheck™ website, at VA.BeeCheck.org, in order to provide information to pesticide applicators regarding the location of beehives in the vicinity of a planned pesticide application.

DISCLAIMERS

- By submitting an application to the Program, the applicant agrees to hold free and harmless the Commonwealth of Virginia and its officers, employees, and agents from and against all loss, liability, injury, and damage, including but not limited to injury or death to any person or damage to any property, resulting from or caused by, directly or indirectly, the applicant's beekeeping activity.
- The Department reserves the right to revise these guidelines.

QUESTIONS

Email inquiries regarding the Beehive Distribution Program to VABees@vdacs.virginia.gov.