

Pacific Northwest Honey Bee Pollination Survey – 2005

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Since 1986 the Honey Bee Laboratory at Oregon State University has conducted an annual survey of pollination economics in the Pacific Northwest (PNW). The information from each year of the survey has been made available both regionally and nationally. The information has proved to be valuable to individual beekeepers who generate income from pollination rental.

The use of managed honey bee colonies for commercial crop pollination remains the most important function of the PNW beekeeping industry. The vast and diverse agriculture of the PNW relies on a healthy and strong beekeeping industry to maintain optimum production. An enhanced knowledge of pollination economics is critical to every beekeeper that enters into the world of commercial crop pollination. It is also important for those growers who contract honey bee colonies for managed pollination, to understand current economic conditions of the beekeeping industry.

The pollination requirement for commercial agriculture in the PNW is enormous. Between Washington, Oregon and Idaho there are *ca.* 355,000 acres of crops grown that require or benefit from managed honey bee pollination. The “farm-gate” value of those combined crops is approximately \$1,750,000,000! Nearly half of those acres and 60% of the dollar value is in one crop – apples.

The USDA National Agriculture Statistical Service estimates that there are 200,000 production honey bee colonies in the PNW. And with these numbers there are some interesting hypothetical calculations that can be made. If all growers were to rent 2 colonies for each acre of blooming crop (355,000 acres) the resulting pollination requirement would utilize 710,000 colony rentals. If we multiple this by the 2005 average colony rental fee (\$51³⁰) it results in a potential pollination rental income of more than 36 million dollars. If we add to that the estimated almond pollination income (ten million dollars) we end up with a gross

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