

BEES

LEGISLATOR NOTICE

The Legislative Services Division is required to offer a brief history on the subject matter of a bill draft request prior to drafting (5-4-105, MCA; [Chapter 309, Laws of 2017](#)). The history must include related legislation introduced over the last five sessions and hyperlinks to the bill, hearing information, and fiscal notes. The legislation links below open to the page showing the status and history of bills introduced on this topic in the past. The bill text and any related fiscal notes can be accessed through the link at the top of that page.

Legislation can be complex and this history is not intended to be exhaustive. Please contact the drafter of the requested bill for more information.

Background Materials and Research

Topic Summary: State law regulates honey bees and beekeeping. (Alfalfa leaf-cutting bees are also regulated, although they are not the focus of this topic primer.) Beehives, a collection of which is known as an apiary site, are regulated to protect against “bee diseases, pests, and other contagious or infectious diseases” and to “prevent interference with proper feeding and honey flow.” The Department of Agriculture registers apiary sites, depending on size and function. State law requires apiary sites be 3 miles apart—with exceptions for pollinator bees, landowner beehives, and “hobbyist beekeepers.” The department may inspect apiary sites, including the ability order transfer of colonies, disinfection, and quarantine. Out-of-state bees must be certified as pest- and disease-free.

Bees are considered “livestock” for the collection of per capita fees to enforce livestock laws. Honey is subject to requirements for food labelling and retail food establishments.

Legislative Services Division Materials: None.

Other Materials: Department of Agriculture website on bees: <https://agr.mt.gov/Bees>

Introduced Legislation

2019: HB433: Chapter number assigned. AN ACT REVISING REQUIREMENTS FOR HOBBYIST APIARIES; REQUIRING REGISTRATION OF HOBBYIST APIARY SITES.

2017: None.

2015: SB31: Chapter number assigned. AN ACT ALLOWING RAW HONEY TO BE BARTERED AND SOLD AS A RAW AND UNPROCESSED FARM PRODUCT AT FARMER'S MARKETS WITHOUT A SPECIAL LICENSE.

2013: None.

2011: None

2009: SB 322: Chapter number assigned. REVISING LAWS RELATED TO APICULTURE; REQUIRING AN APPLICATION FEE FOR A NEW REGISTRATION OF AN APIARY SITE; REVISING APIARY REREGISTRATION, LOCATION, ABANDONMENT, INSPECTION, QUARANTINE, FEE, AND PENALTY PROVISIONS; EXEMPTING HOBBYIST APIARY SITES FROM REGISTRATION PROVISIONS.

Prepared By:
Jason Mohr, research analyst
Legislative Environmental Policy Office