

Project Apis m.



## A Seasonal Guide

# Best Management Practices For Beekeepers Pollinating Almonds

Spring  
Summer  
Autumn  
Winter

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## SPRING

*March - April - May*

### REQUEEN

Maintain genetic quality to meet your objectives.

Select stocks that are productive and disease and pest resistant.

Encourage high drone densities during mating season to provide well-mated queens and genetically diverse colonies.

Discourage stocks that are excessively defensive.

Consider making colony increases by shaking bees from your healthiest colonies.

Replace comb with new foundation. Develop a comb replacement schedule.

Cull weak colonies. Do not combine weak collapsing colonies with healthy colonies.

### INSPECT & MONITOR

Check hives for pests and diseases. Early detection is key.

Use diagnostic services for objective colony assessment.

Follow regional guidelines for action thresholds for Varroa and Nosema control.

### SWARMING

Control by making nucs and/or splits.

### NUTRITION

Place bees on locations with abundant and diverse floral resources.

Carrying capacities vary. Locate optimum densities for colony placement.

Provide plentiful and clean water.

## SUMMER

*June - July - August*

### INSPECT & MONITOR - VARROA

Be aware that strong colonies in mid-Summer can be highly infested with Varroa mites and can crash in late-Summer and Fall.

Check often. Conduct a random sampling of hives.

Use biotech methods to suppress mite populations when surplus honey is being produced.

Exercise judicious treatment and use soft chemicals. Follow recommended label instructions.

Rotate treatments to prevent resistance.

Recheck for efficacy. Don't assume your treatments are working.

### INSPECT & MONITOR - NOSEMA

Check often using a random sampling with microscopic examination.

Be aware that Nosema in the presence of high mite levels can compromise colony health.

Chemical control with Fumagillin. Practice judicious treatment. Follow proper prep, storage and application.

### NUTRITION

Natural forage can be limited in late Summer.

When floral resources are inadequate, feed bees sugar syrup and pollen substitutes to improve colony survival and performance.

### POLLINATION CONTRACT

Have your almond pollination contract in place by the end of summer at the latest.

A contract template can be accessed at [www.ProjectApis.org](http://www.ProjectApis.org) under the 'Downloads' tab.

## AUTUMN

*September - October - November*

### NUTRITION

Fall is a critical time to maintain bee strength and build baby bees for almond pollination - Feb. 1st.

Forage can be limited in early Fall, supplemental feeding is critical, especially protein, to target strong 8-frame colonies by early Spring.

Water is as important as food. Keep bees well-hydrated.

### REQUEEN

Over-wintering colonies fare better if young. Requeen if necessary.

### INSPECT & MONITOR

Continue to inspect colonies and apply treatments as necessary to control pests and diseases.

### TRANSPORTATION

Prepare colonies for transport to CA orchards.

Have colonies inspected and certified in state-of-origin to mitigate border station delays.

Self-inspect colonies prior to shipment. Keep hives and pallets free from soil, weeds and plant debris.

### BUSINESS MANAGEMENT

Maintain a reserve; don't commit all your colonies to contract.

### COLONY MANAGEMENT

Check frames of brood for intended strength to coincide with almond bloom.

## WINTER

*December - January - February*

**Beekeeper's goal: Strong 8-frame colonies for almond pollination by February 1st.**

### MAINTENANCE

Good maintenance prolongs the life of hive parts, clothing, vehicles and other apiary equipment.

### NUTRITION

Continue supplemental feeding and hydration.

### COLONY MANAGEMENT

Order packages, nucs and queens for coming year.

Time hive placement prior to bloom and pick-up after almond bloom.

Be aware that overwintering location can positively or negatively affect the strength of colonies.

### KEYS TO SUCCESS

Secure a pollination contract early for the following season.

A signed contract protects both grower and beekeeper.

Determine pollination fees that are realistic relative to your operation costs.

Be dependable with the timing of hive drops and pick-ups.

Be visible to your growers.

Develop contingency plans for the unexpected.

Keep records. Read past year's diary and prepare for the coming year.

Attend national and regional bee meetings.