

Article 55.

North Carolina Bee and Honey Act of 1977.

§ 106-634. Declaration of policy.

The General Assembly hereby declares that it is in the public interest to promote and protect the bee and honey industry in North Carolina and to authorize the Commissioner of Agriculture and the Board of Agriculture to perform services and conduct activities to promote, improve, and enhance the bee and honey industry in North Carolina particularly relative to small beekeepers; to regulate all bees of the superfamily Apoidea in any stage of development; the causal agents of their disease or disorders, and their pests; to protect the bee and honey industry in North Carolina from bee diseases and disorders and to provide regulatory services in the areas of pollination of plants, honeybee poisonings, thefts, bee management and marketing. (1977, c. 238, s. 1.)

§ 106-635. Definitions.

As used in this Article:

- (1) The term "apiary" means bees, comb, hives, appliances, or colonies, wherever they are kept, located, or found.
- (2) The term "bee(s)" means insects of the superfamily Apoidea; in particular, the honeybees, *Apis mellifera* (L). It includes all life stages of such insects, their genetic material, and dead remains.
- (3) The term "beeyard" means a location or site where bees are located in hives.
- (4) The term "Board" means the North Carolina Board of Agriculture.
- (5) The term "Brazilian or African bee" means bees of the subspecies *Apis mellifera* *Adansonii* and their progeny.
- (6) The term "colony" means one hive and its contents, including bees, comb, and appliances.
- (7) The term "comb" includes all materials which are normally deposited into hives by bees. It does not include extracted honey or royal jelly, trapped pollen, and processed beeswax.
- (8) The term "commercial beekeeper" means a beekeeper who owns or operates 200 or more colonies of bees, or a beekeeper who moves bees across state lines.
- (9) The term "Commissioner" means the North Carolina Commissioner of Agriculture or his designated agents.
- (10) The term "Department" means the North Carolina Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services.
- (11) The term "disease" means any infectious disease, parasite, or pest that detrimentally affects bees.
- (12) The term "disorder" means any disease, poisoning, pest, parasite, or predator damage, toxic substance injury, or undesirable trait or genetic strain of the bee that detrimentally affects bees or the bee and honey industry.
- (13) The term "exposed" means having been in circumstances where the possibility of infection or damage by a disease or disorder occurred. Bees in an apiary where disease or disorder is present or where there has been an exchange of equipment with a diseased apiary may be considered exposed.
- (14) The term "health certificate" means a statement issued by the State Entomologist certifying that bees or regulated articles are apparently free of

disease or disorder based on an inspection or freedom from exposure to disease or disorder.

- (15) The term "hive" means any receptacle or container, or part of receptacle or container, which is made or prepared for the use of bees, or which is inhabited by bees.
- (16) The term "honey" means for the purpose of defining honey as a regulated article in the control of bee diseases or disorders, the natural food product made by the honeybees from the nectar of flowers, the saccharine exudation of plants, honeydew, sugar, corn syrup, or any other material along with any adulterants.
- (17) The term "honeybees" means honey-producing insects of the genus *Apis*.
- (18) The term "honeyflow" means the seasonal yielding of nectar by honey plants.
- (19) The term "honey plants" means blooming plants from which bees gather nectar or pollen.
- (20) The term "infested or infected" means showing symptoms of or having been exposed to the causal agent of a bee disease or disorder to such a degree that there is a possibility of the infected organisms or material transmitting the disease or disorder to other bees.
- (21) The term "moveable frame hive" means any hive where the frames can be removed without damaging the comb.
- (22) The term "permit" means an authorization to allow movement or other action involving bees or regulated articles.
- (23) The term "regulated article" means any bees, bee equipment, comb, beeswax, honey, pollen, causal agents of disease, toxic substances, products of the hive, containers, and any other item regulated under this Article or pursuant regulations.
- (24) The term "symptomless carrier" means to possess or bear a disease or disorder in a suppressed state having the potential for spreading the disease or disorder. (1977, c. 238, s. 2; 1997-261, s. 67.)

§ 106-636. Powers and duties of Commissioner generally.

The Commissioner shall promote the bee and honey industry in North Carolina. The Commissioner may perform services, cooperate in research activities, conduct investigations, publish information and cooperate with the beekeeping industry to protect and improve beekeeping in North Carolina. He may work toward enhancing honey plants and improving honeybees. He may investigate thefts of honeybees, equipment or products; cooperate in preventative measures; and assist in prosecution of suspects. (1977, c. 238, s. 3.)

§ 106-637. Authority of Board to accept gifts, enter contracts, etc.

The Board is authorized to accept gifts, grants, or donations from any source for the purpose of promoting and protecting the bee and honey industry. The Board is authorized to issue grants or enter contracts or agreements for the furtherance of the purpose of this Article. (1977, c. 238, s. 4.)

§ 106-638. Authority of Board to adopt regulations, standards, etc.

The Board may adopt regulations and set procedures for the purpose of carrying out the provisions of this Article. The Board may adopt minimum standards for colony strength and disease tolerance levels for hives rented for pollination of crops, and the Commissioner shall

certify hives meeting those standards. The Board may adopt regulations to regulate or prohibit entrance into North Carolina of bees or regulated articles to protect the bee and honey industry from bee diseases, disorders, overcrowding of honey pasture, or other encroachments deemed by the Board not to be in the best interest of the beekeepers of North Carolina. The Board may adopt regulations relating to, but shall not be limited to, providing for inspection of bees; and surveying and developing regulations to control, eradicate, abate, prevent exposure to, or prevent the introduction of or movement into or within North Carolina of bee diseases, disorders, pests or enemies of bees; or products that are a threat to beekeeping in North Carolina. The diseases, disorders, and products regulated shall include, but not be confined to bee diseases, poisons, bee pests, pollen, causal agents of disease, bee parasites and predators and toxic substances. The Board may regulate undesirable species or strains of bees including but not limited to Brazilian or African strains of bees. Regulations may include articles, exposed to infection or infestation, bees, honey, honeycomb, beeswax, beeswax refuse, royal jelly, containers, and beekeeping equipment to include sale, exposure and shipment of said and like items. The Board may adopt regulations governing beeyards or sites of commercial beekeepers. The Board is authorized to adopt regulations and set fees for extra or special inspections, issuance of certificates, permits, registrations, and regulatory activities. (1977, c. 238, s. 5.)

§ 106-639. Regulations for control and prevention of diseases and disorders.

The Board may adopt regulations and procedures for the disposition of bees infected or infested with diseases or disorders, beekeeping equipment, and other regulated articles kept or moved in violation of this Article and pursuant regulations. Such regulations may authorize the Commissioner to quarantine, destroy, confiscate, or otherwise dispose of, eradicate, establish cleanup areas, and require owners to disinfect, fumigate, treat with drugs, or destroy bees or articles at their own expense or to take measures to eradicate bee diseases or disorders.

The Board shall have authority to either allow, require, or forbid use of drugs in the control of bee diseases or disorders, and may define as infested or infected symptomless carriers of a disease or disorder, declare bees that have been treated with disease-masking drugs to be infested or infected, and consider bees or articles which have been exposed to a disease or disorder to be infected or infested.

The Board may also adopt regulations governing beeswax salvage operations and honey house sanitation for disease prevention. (1977, c. 238, s. 6.)

§ 106-639.1. Permit to sell bees.

Prior to selling bees in North Carolina, a person shall obtain a permit from the Commissioner. Application for the permit shall be made on a form provided by the Commissioner, and shall be accompanied by a nonrefundable fee of twenty-five dollars (\$25.00). The Commissioner may deny, suspend, or revoke a permit for any violation of this Article or rules adopted to implement the Article. Permits shall expire annually on December 31 and may be renewed upon payment of a fee of twenty-five dollars (\$25.00). All proceedings concerning the denial, suspension, or revocation of a permit shall be conducted in accordance with the Administrative Procedure Act, Chapter 150B of the General Statutes. No permit shall be required for (i) the sale of less than 10 bee hives in a calendar year, (ii) a one-time going-out-of-business sale of less than 50 bee hives, or (iii) the renting of bees for pollination purposes or the movement of bees to gather honey. (1991, c. 349, s. 1.)

§ 106-640. Authority of Commissioner to protect industry from diseases and disorders, etc.

The Commissioner shall protect the bee and honey industry from diseases and disorders of the honeybee (*Apis mellifera*) and other insects in the superfamily (Apoidea) and shall provide services and enforce provisions of this Article and pursuant regulations. The Commissioner may adopt regulations for prohibiting or regulating the movement of bees and regulated articles into and from quarantine or cleanup areas and enforce procedures for control and cleanup of diseases or disorders in such areas.

The Commissioner is authorized to establish postentry quarantines and issue hold orders for inspection of bees or regulated articles imported into North Carolina. (1977, c. 238, s. 7.)

§ 106-641. Giving false information to Commissioner; hives; certificates, permits, etc.

It is unlawful to knowingly give false information to the Commissioner concerning diseased bees or bees exposed to disease, their treatment, or disposition.

The Commissioner may require that bees be kept in moveable frame hives and be maintained in an inspectable condition or in other hives where an inspection for disease or disorder can be readily made.

The Board may adopt regulations for issuance of health certificates, moving permits, and the registration of honeybees and may require marking or identification of honeybee colonies or apiaries. (1977, c. 238, s. 8.)

§ 106-642. Emergency action by Commissioner.

The Commissioner may take emergency action with respect to Board authority in the provisions of this Article if needed to protect the bee and honey industry in North Carolina. Such action shall remain in force until rescinded by the Commissioner or acted on by the Board. (1977, c. 238, s. 9.)

§ 106-643. Designation of persons to administer Article; inspections, etc.

The Commissioner shall have the authority to designate such employees of the Department or persons collaborating with the Department as may seem expedient to carry out the duties and exercise the powers provided by this Article. The Commissioner is authorized to survey or inspect premises for the presence of bees or other regulated articles, inspect colonies for bee diseases and disorders, and otherwise enforce the provisions of this Article and pursuant regulations. The Commissioner or his designated agent shall have authority to inspect vehicles or other means of transportation and their cargo suspected of carrying bees or regulated articles, and enter upon any premises to inspect any bees or regulated articles to determine the presence or absence of diseases or disorders.

Such inspections and other activities may be conducted with the permission of the owner or person in charge. If permission is denied the Commissioner or his designated agent, such inspections and other activities may be conducted in a reasonable manner, with a warrant, with respect to any premises or vehicles. Such warrant shall be issued pursuant to Article 4A of Chapter 15. A superior court or district court judge may issue confiscation orders on any bees or articles for which confiscation is authorized in this Article or pursuant regulations. (1977, c. 238, s. 10.)

§ 106-644. Penalties.

(a) If anyone shall attempt to prevent inspection as provided in this Article or shall otherwise interfere with the Commissioner of Agriculture, or any of his agents, while engaging in

the performance of his duties under this Article, or shall violate any provisions of this Article or any regulation of the Board of Agriculture adopted pursuant to this Article, he shall be guilty of a Class 3 misdemeanor. Each day's violation shall constitute a separate offense.

(b) The Commissioner may assess a civil penalty of not more than ten thousand dollars (\$10,000) against a person who violates this Article or a rule adopted to implement this Article. In determining the amount of the penalty, the Commissioner shall consider the degree and extent of harm caused by the violation. No civil penalty may be assessed under this section unless the person has been given the opportunity for a hearing pursuant to the Administrative Procedure Act, Chapter 150B of the General Statutes. If not paid within 30 days after the effective date of a final decision by the Commissioner, the penalty may be collected by any lawful means for the collection of a debt.

The clear proceeds of civil penalties assessed pursuant to this subsection shall be remitted to the Civil Penalty and Forfeiture Fund in accordance with G.S. 115C-457.2. (1977, c. 238, s. 11; 1991, c. 349, s. 2; 1993, c. 539, s. 809; 1994, Ex. Sess., c. 24, s. 14(c); 1998-215, s. 20.)

§ 106-645. Limitations on local government regulation of hives.

(a) Notwithstanding Article 6 of Chapter 153A of the General Statutes, no county shall adopt or continue in effect any ordinance or resolution that prohibits any person or entity from owning or possessing five or fewer hives.

(b) Notwithstanding Article 8 of Chapter 160A of the General Statutes, a city may adopt an ordinance to regulate hives within its incorporated limits in accordance with this subsection. The city shall comply with all of the following:

- (1) Any ordinance shall permit up to five hives on a single parcel within the incorporated limits of the city.
- (2) Any ordinance shall require that the hive be placed at ground level or securely attached to an anchor or stand. If the hive is securely attached to an anchor or stand, the city may permit the anchor or stand to be permanently attached to a roof surface.
- (3) Any ordinance may include regulation of the placement of the hive on the parcel, including setbacks from the property line and from other hives.
- (4) Any ordinance may require removal of the hive if the owner no longer maintains the hive or if removal is necessary to protect the health, safety, and welfare of the public.

(c) For purposes of this section, the term "hive" has the same definition as in G.S. 106-635(15). (2015-246, s. 8; 2024-32, s. 12.)