

NATIONAL HONEY REPORT



United States
Department of
Agriculture

Agricultural Marketing Service
Fruit and Vegetable Programs
Market News Branch

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www.ams.usda.gov/mnreports/fvmhoney.pdf

Number XXIX - #12

Issued Monthly

January 19, 2010

HONEY MARKET FOR THE MONTH OF December, 2009

IN VOLUMES OF 10,000 POUNDS OR GREATER UNLESS OTHERWISE STATED

Prices paid to beekeepers for extracted, unprocessed honey in major producing states by packers, handlers & other large users, cents per pound, f.o.b. or delivered nearby, containers exchanged or returned, prompt delivery & payment unless otherwise stated.

- REPORT INCLUDES BOTH NEW AND OLD CROP HONEY -

(# Some in Small Lot --- +Some delayed payments or previous commitment)

DAKOTAS			
Clover	white	\$1.38	- \$1.45
FLORIDA			
Brazilian Pepper	extra light amber	\$1.25	
Brazilian Pepper	light amber	\$1.16	- \$1.19
MONTANA			
Clover	white	\$1.45	- \$1.48
Prices paid to Canadian Beekeepers for unprocessed, bulk honey by packers and importers in U. S. currency, f.o.b. shipping point, containers included unless otherwise stated. Duty and crossing charges extra. Cents per pound.			
Province Not Reported -			
Mixed Flowers	white	\$1.50	- \$1.57

Prices paid to importers for bulk honey, duty paid, containers included, cents per pound, ex-dock or point of entry unless otherwise stated.

Argentina			
Mixed Flowers	white	\$1.44	- \$1.45
Brazil			
Mixed Flowers	light amber	\$1.16	- \$1.30
Organic	light amber	\$1.38	- \$1.40
India			
Mixed Flowers	extra light amber	\$1.35	
Mixed Flowers	light amber	\$1.18	
Vietnam			
Mixed Flowers	light amber	\$1.10	- \$1.20

COLONY, HONEY PLANT AND MARKET CONDITIONS DURING DECEMBER, 2009

APPALACHIAN DISTRICT (MD, PA, VA, WV): Snow covered ground continues to a blanket much of the Appalachian District from a pre-Christmas winter storm. The storm was the fifth largest day snowfall on record. Temperatures at the end of the month continued colder than normal and averaged ten to fifteen degrees below normal for the area. Beekeepers were busy with equipment maintenance and winter meetings.

ALABAMA: Honey for sale is spotty at best across Alabama but generally more available in the southern part of the state. Most North Alabama beekeepers have been feeding in December and many state beekeepers plan to feed some bees in January. Losses so far appear to be light.

ARIZONA: Temperatures in Arizona were below normal and ranged from a high of 78°F in Marana to a low of -19°F at Grand Canyon. There was precipitation across most the state with as many as 21 out of 22 stations reported any precipitation during the weeklong reporting periods across the state. None of the 22 reporting districts were above normal levels for the year, 19 out of 22 stations were less than 60 percent of normal precipitation levels for the year, and all 22 stations were less than 80 percent of normal levels.

Desert plant bloom was the main source of nectar and pollen. Bee activity was limited. Beekeepers have been or are continuing to make preparations to move colonies to other locations for pollination of nut and fruit trees. Demand for honey remained good.

ARKANSAS: Various trees provided pollen and nectar. Colonies were in generally good condition. Temperatures were below normal and rainfall was adequate. Supply and demand were good.

CALIFORNIA: The month started out dry, with temperatures normal to below normal. Throughout the month, a series of weather systems swept across California, providing a variety of unusual conditions. Snowfall across the Sierra Nevada Mountains was impressive, with over 2 feet falling at the higher elevations. As the month came to a close, a series of Pacific storm systems moved through California, bringing rainfall to most of the state. High pressure began to rebuild over California, bringing an end to the precipitation. Fog was trapped across much of the Central Valley; otherwise the state enjoyed mostly sunny skies at the start of the New Year. With the winter solstice behind us, the queens are resuming egg-laying and increasing their production every day. The demands of the burgeoning brood nests for food and heat are putting the small populations of winter bees to work. Soon, we will enter the period of the year when the colonies are the most fragile. The minimal bee populations will be working hard to become as strong as possible before spring, the honey flow and the reproductive season arrive. Bees are feeding on eucalyptus trees, Manzanita, bottlebrush, borage, manzanita, calendula, wild mustard and radish bloom this month, and other plants that are already in bloom. They are also still being fed sugar water and pollen substitutes. Bee decline continues: Beekeepers continue to report bee losses in California and other states due to colony collapse disorder, mites

and other infestations. A University of California bee expert says the number of healthy hives continues to decline. Drought conditions throughout the country had made 2009 the lowest honey producing year ever. California almond farmers need bees in their orchards in February to pollinate their trees. How many bees are needed is uncertain because of water shortages in almond growing areas.

COLORADO: Colorado beekeepers have sent their bees to warmer climates. The collapse of hives in October has made the possibility of a shortage for the almond bloom in California a real threat depending on how the hives look when they are opened in late January. Prices were holding steady at approximately \$1.50.

FLORIDA: Many beekeepers in the warmest areas were still splitting hives in an effort to increase bee numbers and general health. One concern in many parts of Florida at this time of year is the limited amounts of nectar and pollen available for the bees. Warmer days will see the bees expending more energy foraging for food supplies than they can collect and return to the colony. The next major source of nectar and pollen will be citrus beginning in mid to late January. Most bees are being fed, and many are being treated for mites. Many hives will be relocated to California for almond pollination in the next two months. The water shortage in parts of California has caused growers to destroy some of the almond groves and replace them with crops that require less water. Fewer hives are expected to be needed this year for pollination because of the reduced almond acreage. Florida inspectors have begun inspecting and certifying hives for relocation to California. Bee health is generally good with no major problems being reported at this time.

GEORGIA: In early December the hives were being prepared for the winter months and feeding off of extra honey, sugar syrup, sucrose and protein supplements. The bees appeared to be in good shape in the Northern part of the state and in fair shape in the Southern regions. Some areas were affected by the heavy rains over the fall period. Some losses of up to thirty or more percent have been reported and many beekeepers may be applying for disaster relief for assistance. Currently, the hives are in cluster mode due to the severely cold temperatures which makes it difficult to check on the physical condition of the bees. Beekeepers are not able to open and split the hives to introduce new queens until after the freezing weather conditions change to warmer temperatures. Some have had to postpone shipments of imported queens until then.

IDAHO: The Idaho Honey Industry Association had their annual meeting the first weekend of December in Boise, ID. Two of the key speakers were Jeff Pettis from the USDA-Agricultural Research Service office in Beltsville, MD and Gordon Wardell from the USDA-Agricultural Research Service office in Tucson, AZ. Both presented information on their specialty areas and research. Jeff Pettis specializes in research on overall hive health while Gordon Wardell specializes in bee nutrition.

ILLINOIS: Winter-like temperatures and varied snowfall were reported throughout the state. Heavier amounts of snowfall ranged from 4 inches to 8 inches in the northern section; central and southern areas saw little accumulation for the period. In the Southern section frequent heavy rainfall halted fieldwork and the movement of bees to winter yards. The wet conditions hampered beekeepers from checking on hive conditions. Most hives were in good condition due to good fall buildup and fairly mild temperatures overall. Honey sales were good due to holiday baking demand. Very few bulk sales or movement was reported.

INDIANA: As winter returned to the state, snowfall varied from a few inches to a trace. Most of the heavier snowfall was reported in northern section. Honeybees were in generally good condition due to warmer temperatures allowing cleansing flights. Most bees were in fairly tight clusters. Fall stores buildup was good. Holiday sales were good and some bulk honey sales were reported.

IOWA, KANSAS, MISSOURI, NEBRASKA: Temperatures across the lower midwest were below normal and precipitation was above normal. Activity was light as beekeepers were preparing schedules for the upcoming year. Some beekeepers continued to see population declines. Winter feeding will continue to be monitored. One note of good news came from a Federal Court. A U.S. District judge in New York ruled that the pesticide spirotetramat (Movento and Ultor) manufactured by Bayer CropScience to be pulled from shelves and be made illegal for sale by January 15, 2010.

KENTUCKY: Not available at time of release.

LOUISIANA: Various trees provided pollen and nectar. Colonies were in generally good condition. Temperatures were below normal and rainfall was adequate. Supply and demand were good.

MICHIGAN: Beekeepers readied their hives for winter, by checking colonies for mite problems as well as for feeding conditions. Supplemental feeding of many hives took place across the state. There have also been cleansing flights in the past month. Most migratory beekeepers have left for Florida and other southeastern states. Demand for honey was good.

MINNESOTA: Almost all bees have been moved out of state to warmer climates for the duration of winter. With the bees in hibernation and prices for white clover honey holding steady at approx \$1.45-1.50 there is little to do in the month of December other than hold meetings to try and prepare for next year. In early December there was a joint meeting of the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources and the Minnesota Department of Transportation to discuss various topics dealing with roadside pest control. Integrated pest management techniques, planting varied native species and less roadside spraying were all covered to varying degrees.

MISSISSIPPI: The month of December had beekeepers getting the bees ready to be winterized for the upcoming cold weather. Heavy rains throughout much of the state kept them from working with the bees most of the time. Most areas reported the hives to be in fair to average condition for this time of year, due to a rough fall period and weather related conditions. Currently the beekeepers cannot open the hives and check on them. The freezing temperatures and wet conditions have the bees in clusters for protection and survival. Most of the bees were supplemented earlier in the fall to prepare for the winter months. Once the hives can be opened, feeding may be required to boost weight and get them back in good condition. Beekeepers were hopeful that the Red Maple will be available later in mid January for fresh pollen to feed on.

MONTANA: Most areas experienced below normal amounts of rain and snow during the month. Temperatures were normal to slightly colder than normal. A mid-month arctic outbreak on December 15 resulted in lower temperatures. Among the coldest were Simpson at -37°F and Havre at -30°F on the same day. Bee keepers were busy with equipment repair and winter inspections of colonies overwintering over in home yards. Keepers were also busy making trips to California or warmer areas to check on the security of their migratory colonies, providing supplemental food when necessary, and making plans in anticipation of beginning to move their colonies into the almond orchards in late January. Colonies were in generally good condition and mite problems were under control. Bee drop or losses were within expected amounts. Honey demand was good.

NEW ENGLAND: In New England the month of December experienced cold, seasonal temperatures with precipitation either from periods of heavy rainfall or Nor'easter storms producing heavy snowfall which resulted in high moisture levels for the entire region. Early December weather was erratic with on and off cold and mild weather, whereby the bees early on had a chance to reorganize themselves, haul out the dead and go on cleansing flights. Bees are pretty much in cluster conditions and flying on warmer days. Nectar and pollen sources have all but ended with just a few late pollen sources, amazingly bringing some bright orange pollen in presumably from fall aster, heath, mum blossoms, perennial bachelor buttons and Johnny jump ups. Rapidly colder conditions have finished all floral food sources for this season. Over wintering procedures entails installing mouse guards, entrance reducers and insulation boards between inner and outer covers and/or boards under the bottom screens to ensure proper ventilation. In New England beekeepers have closed up their hives for the winter. Bees are snuggled in their hives but reportedly the clusters are smaller than desired. Keepers report that as much as 70% of colonies are light in stores with just enough to fill the brood chambers. Low stores coupled with the usual cold, harsh weather of winter in the future will surely mean a high mortality rate for the over wintered population. As needed, colonies are being feed with fondant, protein patties, sugar candy, sugar water syrup, high fructose corn syrup and using frame feeders. In order to add to the stored food that was left after surplus honey was drawn off. In New England, the average consumption is 60 lbs of honey throughout the winter. Steady cold weather lowers the rate at which honeybees consume honey stores. If the weather pattern stays cold it won't hurt the bees as long as the hives have good ventilation. In New England, hives normally lose 5 to 10% of their population due to winter related issues. Cold weather will not adversely affect bees as much as condensation will. Colonies should be ventilated to abate this problem. Many keepers report that bees have exhibited the usually late winter pattern of clustering just under the inner cover. However, clusters are tight enough to keep the bees safe. Keepers have registered early colony losses presumably due to low cluster size, low stores and erratic weather temperature swings. Many keepers reported finding drones still in their hives thus the eviction process started very late this year. The most important thing in a healthy hive is nutrition. Hives weaken under the stress of protein deficiency. Limited pollen and nectar means less brood and poor nutrition. This years honey stores on brood frames are very small although in many cases large quantities of pollen are found. This will likely contribute to creating a greater winter loss as many colonies are light and their winter bees were not developed under the best of conditions. Most keepers reported getting a late start (30 to 45 days behind) in fall preparations and (IPM) integrated pest management programs. This could mean an increase in viral infections in queens coupled with a stronger disease laden varroa mite population that could carry over to next season with another season of queen problems especially under performing weak queens. Harvesting and extracting honey is virtually completed. This years honey crop numbers have not been finalized as some locations have exhibited very low production. Some yields are half what they usually are. Keepers are giving estimates at 30 to 35 lbs per colony verses 50 lbs last year with last year also being a poor producing year. Honey sales have been excellent going into the holiday season. Keepers have crafted many products from the fruits of their hives to sell for the holiday season primarily as stocking stuffers such as decorative honey decanters, candles, creams, lip balms and many edible holiday treats. The holiday season brings on an increase demand for local honey with the supply lower than normal. Demand at farmers markets and all retail/wholesale outlets are strong. Reportedly honey sales remains very good and continues to grow in spite of the recent price increases. Supplies of new crop locally produced honey are very short and in some places are scarce. Prices quoted for 1 lb bottled units were steady at \$7.00 to \$9.00 mostly \$9.00 occasionally higher inclusive of all varieties; for food service operations prices were steady with wholesale 5 gallon units at \$150.00 to \$200.00 mostly \$175.00 and occasionally lower for both light and dark raw and natural honey depending on variety and quality.

NEW YORK: Beekeepers readied their hives for winter by checking colonies for mite problems as well as for feeding conditions. Supplemental feeding of many hives took place across the state. There were also cleansing flights in the past month. Most migratory beekeepers have left for Florida and other southeastern states. Demand for honey was good.

NORTH CAROLINA: North Carolina received an abundant amount of precipitation during December. Heavy snow was a problem in many areas in the western part of the state. Average temperatures ranged from 30° to 50° and precipitation levels were 5.59 inches above normal. The eastern part of the state was 3.02 inches above normal with temperatures ranging from 33° to 52°. Beekeepers were advised to keep a close watch for starvation. If feeding is necessary, temperatures need to be above 50°. Sales continued to be excellent for available supplies.

NORTH & SOUTH DAKOTA: A blizzard covered much of the area around Christmas. Most outside work was curtailed as temperatures dropped. Bees were in their winter homes – typically potato sheds or Southern locations.

OHIO: Beekeepers readied their hives for winter by checking colonies for mite problems as well as for feeding conditions. Supplemental feeding of many hives took place across the state. There have also been cleansing flights in the past month. Most migratory beekeepers have left for Florida and other southeastern states. Demand for honey was good.

OKLAHOMA: Various trees provided pollen and nectar. Colonies were in generally good condition. Temperatures were below normal and rainfall was adequate. Supply and demand were good.

OREGON: During December, moderate amounts of precipitation fell in the valley floors and over the mountains ranges of Oregon. The month started with a series of several strong winter storms early in the month before the weather patterns shifted further to the south bringing several weaker systems to the state for the remainder of the month. During December, beekeepers were busy with their winter chores, maintaining and repairing equipment, spot checking wintering colonies in home yards, and traveling to California to check migratory colonies. Colonies were in good health and mite problems were under control. Wild plant and irrigated farm crop pollen and nectar sources were finished for the season. Honey demand was good.

SOUTH CAROLINA: Colonies were in good to fair condition. Bees were not as prolific due to cold temperatures across the state with exception of a few days when highs reached the lower 60s in the midlands to the upper 70s along the coast. Moisture conditions were good with South Carolina

recording its wettest December on record. December's rainfall of 9.31 inches at Columbia was the highest December total in recordkeeping. The majority of bees were fed due to expired or, in some areas, light stores. Bees were preparing for the start of the dormant period in January.

TENNESSEE: Tennessee beekeepers were finding it necessary to feed colonies due to lack of food stores. There were very limited sources of nectar and pollen this month due to cold, wet weather. Colony losses were expected to be higher than average this year due to lack of sufficient winter stores.

TEXAS: Various trees provided pollen and nectar. In addition, some beekeepers were feeding. Colonies were in generally good condition. Temperatures varied from freezing to the mid 50s and rainfall was adequate. Honey demand and supply continued strong.

UTAH: The Utah Beekeepers Association had their annual meeting the first weekend of December. Two of the keynote speakers were Jim and Mary Anne Frazier from Penn State University. They have been doing research on the effect of various pesticide combinations commonly found in the field and how it affects honeybee populations. The research has not been fully published; however, beekeepers who were present found the information quite noteworthy.

WASHINGTON: The weather was seasonally cool with some snow in the mountains. Temperatures were cold early in December, but warmed some later in the month. Any bees in the area were consuming extra honey due to the colder weather. Seasonal temperature inversions have kept the skies cloudy with fog and temperatures have been in the low 30Fs. Some reported decent honey sales.

WISCONSIN: The week of December 7th brought the season's first large snowstorm which halted a harvest that has gone on longer than usual. Some reported it was the longest harvest in 35 years. The snowfall measured from 14 to 18 inches across the state. Temperatures for the month were about 5-9 degrees below normal. Some areas reported a few days of sub zero temperatures. However, in general most of the areas had little or no ground frozen. Honeybees were in generally good condition. However, some beekeepers noted there were few or no cleansing flights due to the weather. Very little bulk honey moved throughout the month.

U.S Exports and U.S. Imports of Honey By Country, Quantity, and Value

Data was not available at time of release. This report will be revised when the data becomes available.