

ANALYSIS OF HB 2515

House Agriculture & Ecology Committee

January 19, 1998

BACKGROUND:

The Department of Agriculture administers the apiary statutes, Chapter 15.60 RCW. Under these statutes, the Department is to establish a program for the apiary industry that provides regulatory inspection services, assures the availability of bees for pollination services, combats bee pests, and promotes the vitality of the industry. (RCW 15.60.007.) Among the authorities of the Director of Agriculture under the apiary statutes are the authorities to: establish maximum allowable levels of bee pests that may be present for the movement of bee colonies; inspect for pests; mark infested colonies and impound infested or abandoned colonies; establish identification requirements for hives and requirements regarding the handling of bees in transit; and establish standards regarding colony strength, queen bees, and certification. (RCW 15.60.015 through 15.60.025.)

The statutes prohibit the importation of packaged bees, hives, or used beekeeping equipment without a certification of inspection from the agriculture department of the state of origin regarding compliance with this state's apiary statutes, they permit persons to secure from the Department, on a fee-for-service basis, inspections that facilitate the movement of bees. (RCW 15.60.030 and .042.) Under the apiary statutes, abandoning a bee hive, maintaining hives that cannot be readily inspected, taking certain actions to kill or poison bees other than wild bees, and importing Africanized bees (except in certain circumstances) are unlawful acts. (RCW 15.60.150)

The apiary statutes require persons owning hives, brokers of hives, and non-residents who operate hives in this state to register with the Department and to pay a registration fee set by the Director by rule. (RCW 15.60.050.) They establish a pollination service fee for each setting of a hive that is used by an agricultural producer. (RCW 15.60.040.) The statutes also establish an apiary advisory committee to advise the Director regarding the administration of the apiary program. (RCW 15.60.010.) Registration fees are to be used for the expenses of the advisory committee and may be used to support the Department's apiary program or research projects. (RCW 15.60.050(2).) Pollination service fees are to be used to assist in ensuring the vitality and availability of bees for commercial agricultural pollination services. (RCW 15.60.040(1).)

The movement of bees, hives, and beekeeping equipment into the state and in transit in the state may also be regulated under other state laws established for the control of insect pests and plant diseases. (RCW 17.24.011 through .051.) Under these other statutes, the Director may impound bees being transported in the state that are infected or infested. (RCW 17.24.091.)

SUMMARY:

The apiary program administered by the Department of Agriculture under the apiary statutes, including its requirements for registration, registration fees, and pollination service fees, is repealed.