

The West Virginia Beekeepers Association

The **West Virginia Beekeepers Association (WVBA)** is a valuable source of information and support as the following examples illustrate.

The WVBA is a strong supporter of the **Beekeeper Assistance Program** which benefits all registered beekeepers. It came about because of efforts by WV beekeepers. The present state budget does not provide for this program, but the WVBA continues its lobbying efforts to encourage and protect the industry and individual beekeepers. WVBA has an active **Legislative and Agricultural Activities Committee**. Members provide a display at the Capitol on Ag Day, talk with legislators and present each one with a jar or honey-bear of WV honey. WVBA delegations attend legislative hearings that involve beekeeping interests and meet with the Commissioner of Agriculture, presenting concerns of West Virginia beekeepers.

In March, 2002, the **Honeybee was named the West Virginia State Insect**. The State Legislature recognized the potential of the honey industry in the state. This project was initiated by a state beekeeper and supported by WVBA.

WVBA has actively supported the organization and setting up of the **WV Honey Producers, Inc., a Co-op** of beekeepers helping beekeepers. The co-op, completely independent of WVBA, sells bee supplies at reasonable prices, has honey extracting facilities, and will become a hub for wholesale buying and selling of honey. It is located 2 miles W. from I-79, at Weston exit 99.

The WVBA has maintained an information booth at the **West Virginia Honey Festival** since 1992. Association Members distribute a list of the State's local beekeeping associations as well as information fostering an interest in honey, honeybees and beekeeping.

The WVBA maintains **membership in 3 regional and one national associations**. These associations provide valuable contacts, speakers, and printed materials. --- **EAS** (Eastern Apicultural Society), **HAS** (Heartland Apicultural Society), and **MAAREC** (Mid-Atlantic Apicultural Research and Extension Consortium). Association with these 3 groups reflect WVBA's intention to be on the cutting edge of improved beekeeping. A member of the WVBA is a director of the EAS. A member of the WVBA also serves on the National Honey Board.

WVBA sponsors a one-day **spring meeting**, and a two day **fall meeting**. These meetings give WV beekeepers access to nationally recognized speakers from industry and academia. Prior to each meeting WVBA members receive an informative newsletter which outlines the state meeting program and provides critical information and news from around the state.

While no official **WVBA Speakers Bureau** exists, many of the local beekeeping associations that are affiliated with WVBA routinely hold beekeeping short courses for beginners. The WVBA sponsors a certification program for **Master Beekeepers**. The certification program requires 3 years of testing on all aspects of beekeeping, practical, laboratory and field.