ROUGH GRADING OF COLONIES USING RETURNING FORAGER COUNTS

BEES AND BERRIES

The average returning rate of foragers to colonies you have rented is a rough predictor of the bees pollinating blueberry flowers. Watch our training video to learn how to grade your colonies.

<u>Strong</u> colony > 90 bees per minute
<u>Medium</u> 40-90 bees per minute
<u>Weak</u> < 40 bees per minute | <u>Likely dead</u> <5 bees per minute

0 bees/min | 16 bees/min | 36 bees/min | 37 bees/min

52 bees/min | 62 bees/min | 81 bees/min | 105 bees/min

RETURNING FORAGER COUNTS

While the stocking rate of honey bee colonies is an important decision for blueberry growers to make, recent research has shown inconsistent results linking hive density to pollination outcomes. The lack of consistent results may be due to other factors such as landscape and colony strength.

Measuring colony strength can be challenging for growers, as it typically involves having the beekeeper open the colony. An alternative way growers can assess colony strength (without opening the colony) is by assessing the rate at which foraging bees return to the hive during good foraging conditions (>65°F and windspeeds less than 10 miles per hour). Learn more about how to use this method with our online training.

In addition to the benefits of colony strength, the objective of this upcoming guide is to describe blueberry pollination and factors that promote pollination success in open-field and protected culture. We will review how managed and wild pollinators contribute to pollination and how to aid their activity and health. For more information and to stay tuned on the release of this guide, check out the resources below.

SCAN FOR TRAINING

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