



KEEPING BEES IN MICHIGAN

Rules and Regulations

2024 Update

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MICHIGAN STATE
UNIVERSITY | Extension

Extension Bulletin E3476

Overview



This bulletin outlines the rules, regulations, and recommendations for keeping honey bees in Michigan. This document was compiled by Michigan State University Extension and is updated almost annually. Please check the [MSU Extension bookstore](#) to ensure that you have a recent version, and always check regulations directly, as this document is designed to be an educational guide only.

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Common abbreviations

- MSU - Michigan State University
- MDARD - Michigan Department of Agriculture and Rural Development
- RTF - Right to Farm
- GAAMPs - Generally Accepted Agricultural Management Practices
- USDA - United States Department of Agriculture
- APHIS - Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service

Registration of hives in Michigan

NO MANDATORY REGISTRATION

There is no mandatory registration for honey bee hives in Michigan.

VOLUNTARY REGISTRATION TO REDUCE PESTICIDE EXPOSURE



Beekeepers may choose to register their hives with the [BeeCheck](#) program, a mapping tool that enables beekeepers to alert pesticide applicators to the locations of their hives. For more resources and information visit [Fieldwatch.com](#).

Beekeepers in Michigan can also sign up to receive email notifications when pesticides will be applied in response to a public health emergency such as an outbreak of Eastern Equine Encephalitis or West Nile Virus. To sign up for the mailing list, visit [MDARD's email sign up page](#). Under the "Fertilizer and Pesticide" heading, chose "[Emergency Notification for Beekeepers](#)"

Inspection of hives in Michigan

NO MANDATORY INSPECTION

There are no mandatory inspections for honey bee hives in Michigan.

NO INSPECTION FOR TRANSPORTING BEES INTO MICHIGAN

Beekeepers can bring honey bees across state lines *into* Michigan from any other state and can transport bees within Michigan without any inspections, paperwork, or health certificates. It is the beekeeper's responsibility to ensure that the bees that they are purchasing or transporting are in good health and free from disease. The USDA does not regulate interstate movement of bees in the continental United States, but does restrict honey bees, beekeeping equipment, and bee products from other countries under the [Federal Bee Act](#). For more information about importing bees from other countries, [visit the USDA APHIS web page](#).



INSPECTIONS FOR TRANSPORTING BEES OUT OF MICHIGAN

If you are moving bees *from* Michigan to another state, you must meet the requirements of the destination state. Some states require inspections and health certificates before bees can be brought into the state. State apiary requirements can be found at the [Apiary Inspectors of America website](#). If you are not unloading bees in a state (only driving through) you will be operating under Department of Transportation rules; most states only require health certificates for bees that are unloaded in that state.

If you need or would like an inspection in Michigan, contact the Michigan Department of Agriculture and Rural Development (MDARD) at 1-800-292-3939, and ask for the State Apiarist. Fees are charged for inspections as required by the [Michigan Apiary Law](#).

INSPECTIONS FOR BEES MOVED TO CALIFORNIA

California does not require a honey bee health certificate, but they do require inspections for fire ants and plant materials that may be on pallets (invasive species concerns). These inspections can be done in Michigan ahead of travel so the beekeeper can avoid extra stops and waiting at the border. To get a voluntary fire ant inspection in Michigan, contact MDARD at 1-800-292-3939, and ask for the State Apiarist. The inspection must be scheduled for no more than seven days before the bees arrive in California. MDARD inspectors will arrive and perform an inspection following the [California Department of Food and Agriculture \(CDFA\) Voluntary Ant-Free Certification Protocol](#). If the load is not inspected before departure from Michigan, it will be inspected at the border and again at the final destination. More information on what to expect can be found at the [CDFA website Entering CA: Border Protection Stations \(BPS\)](#).



California law requires beekeepers to register the location of their colonies with the county agricultural commissioner. Registration can be done through the [BeeWhere program](#) or through [Bee Check/FieldWatch, Inc.](#) More information and guides on best practices can be found at the [California State Beekeepers website](#).



Photo By Katie Kokx

Siting hives in Michigan

ZONING AND TAX CLASSIFICATIONS

Zoning is a tool used by many local units of government to regulate acceptable land use, including beekeeping and other agricultural operations. The zoning of your property may determine if you are able to keep bees on your property. To determine how your property is zoned, or to apply for a change in zoning, contact the zoning administrator for your municipality or county.

Zoning and tax classifications are different, even though they use the same groupings. Beekeeping may change your tax classification, but not your zoning. Raising bees as a hobby would usually not result in being classified agricultural for tax purposes. Commercial producers may best be classified agricultural although the commercial storage, processing, distribution, marketing, or shipping portions of the operation are not agricultural. To determine what classifies as Agricultural Classification according to the tax commission, check the [State of Michigan Classification of Property](#).

[Michigan's Apiary Law](#) does not limit locations for hive placement at the state level. Cities or townships may regulate colonies or prohibit beekeeping through a local ordinance. Many cities however have changed their ordinances to allow beekeeping. MSU maintains a [website on how cities or townships can draft beekeeping friendly ordinances](#), including examples of city ordinances that allow beekeeping. In municipalities of under 100,000 individuals, local ordinances cannot restrict beekeeping when the beekeeper produces an agricultural product for sale, because their ability to keep bees is protected by the [Michigan Right to Farm Act](#), as long as the beekeeper is conforming to the [Generally Accepted Agriculture and Management Practices \(GAAMPs\)](#).



MICHIGAN RIGHT TO FARM ACT

The [Michigan Right to Farm Act](#) (RTFA), P.A. 93, was enacted in 1981 to provide farmers with nuisance protection. To be covered under the RTFA, an operation must fulfill two criteria: 1) be able to demonstrate that they produce an agricultural product for sale, and 2) they must conform to the GAAMPs. There is no minimum requirement for the amount or type of sale, as long as the product is agricultural, so small-scale operations that sell bees or honey would qualify.

MICHIGAN RIGHT TO FARM ACT 93 OF 1981

286.474 (6) Beginning June 1, 2000, except as otherwise provided in this section, it is the express legislative intent that this act preempt any local ordinance, regulation, or resolution that purports to extend or revise in any manner the provisions of this act or generally accepted agricultural and management practices developed under this act. Except as otherwise provided in this section, a local unit of government shall not enact, maintain, or enforce an ordinance, regulation, or resolution that conflicts in any manner with this act or generally accepted agricultural and management practices developed under this act.

If you receive a nuisance complaint, you can request an assessment from the [MDARD RTF program](#). The program will send an inspector who will decide if your operation is following the GAAMPs. MDARD will provide you with a letter after an on-site inspection that can be used as part of your defense. A beekeeper does not have to wait until a complaint is received to determine if they are following the GAAMPs; you can request MDARD to proactively identify if you are adhering to the GAAMPs guidelines. Meeting the requirements, however, does not act as a complete barrier from nuisance lawsuits, ordinance and zoning requirements, or other restrictions.



MDARD RTF staff are available to answer any questions or participate in outreach activities to help farmers, neighbors, and local government officials understand the RTF Act. If you have questions, you can contact the Right to Farm Hotline at 877-632-1783 or email MDARD-RTF@Michigan.gov

GENERALLY ACCEPTED AGRICULTURAL MANAGEMENT PRACTICES (GAAMPS)

The GAAMPs are a collection of farm management practices designed to promote environmental stewardship on Michigan farms. There are different GAAMPs for different topics. Honey bees are included under the [“Care of Farm Animals” GAAMPs](#), posted on the [MDARD Right To Farm Website](#).



The Care of Farm Animal GAAMPs are designed to describe general standards for livestock production and well-being on farm operations. They are intended to be used by the livestock industry and other groups interested in animal welfare as well as an educational tool to promote good care practices. The GAAMPs are updated yearly by a committee of scientists, veterinarians, ethicists, and industry experts. The guidelines are based on the latest scientific research as well as standards established by [the National Resource Council \(NRC\)](#), [the American Veterinary Medical Association \(AVMA\)](#), and other national boards. Although the GAAMPs are non-enforceable guidelines and are not regulated, it is recommended that beekeepers follow the GAAMPs to improve the welfare of their honey bee colonies and avoid conflicts with neighbors.

The honey bee GAAMPs outline best practices on multiple topics. Some guidelines are designed to improve honey bee welfare, including minimizing disturbance during hive handling and transport. Other guidelines exist on how to maximize honey bee health, for example: proper nutrition, including feeding of newly established colonies, and health care, such as pharmaceutical use and disease management.



Other recommendations in the GAAMPs are designed to improve neighbor relations as summarized below:

- **Hive density** - lot sizes smaller than one acre can have no more than 6 full-size colonies. Beekeepers can maintain additional nucleus (<10 frames) colonies for making splits and swarm management.
- **Hive placement** - minimize interaction with humans and animals
- **Hive orientation** - flight paths can be managed by distance, hive entrance orientation, height, and / or barriers.
- **Swarming** - colonies should be managed to deter swarming, generally by splitting the colonies.
- **Provision of water** - assure a consistent water source
- **Queens** - requeen defensive colonies

For more details on these recommendations, read the Honey Bee chapter in the [“Care of Farm Animals” GAAMPs](#).

A farm or farm operation that conforms to these and other applicable GAAMPs adopted under the Michigan Right to Farm Act according to the Michigan Right to Farm Law (Act 93 of 1981, as amended), shall not be found to be a public or private nuisance. This protection also covers farm operations that existed before a change in the land use or occupancy of land within one mile of the boundaries of the farmland, if before that change, the farm would not have been a nuisance. Likewise, this conditional protection applies to any of the following circumstances (Section 3): (a) A change in ownership or size. (b) Temporary cessation, or interruption, of farming. (c) Enrollment in governmental programs. (d) Adoption of innovative technology. (e) A change in type of farm product being produced.

Honey processing

All honey processors should follow the federal guidelines: [21 CFR part 117](#) “Current Good Manufacturing Practice, Hazard analysis, and risk-based preventive controls for human food”. At the state level, honey processing is covered in [The Michigan Food Law of 2000 \(Act 92\)](#). Inspections, licensing, and enforcement are carried out by the [MDARD Food and Dairy Division](#).

MICHIGAN FOOD ESTABLISHMENT LICENSES

If your annual gross honey sales are over \$15,001, you will need to work with MDARD to ensure that your process and your facility are appropriately licensed. The license expires on April 30th every year, and you should be in contact with your regional inspector at least 30 days before that date. Because honey is generally not extracted in April in Michigan, you should be able to work with your inspector to have a later inspection without worrying about a late fee:

Michigan Food Law Act 92 of 2000. 289.4113 Late fee; imposition; waiver; retention; use.

(3) The department may waive the late fee for producers of maple syrup, honey, and other seasonal agricultural products if the license application is submitted not less than 30 days before the applicant engages in processing, packing, freezing, storing, or selling or offering for sale the product.

DETERMINING WHAT PROCESSING LICENSE YOU NEED

The license that you need depends mainly on how you will predominately sell your final product (wholesale or retail) and may switch from year to year based on sales. Note that either license (wholesale or retail will) cover all types of sales, your facility, and your process - you will not need multiple licenses for multiple types of sales.

- 🟡 Up to \$15,000 in honey sales: No license needed, extra label requirements
- 🟡 \$15,000 - \$25,000: Limited Wholesale Food Processor License (FLP)
- 🟡 Over \$25,000 in sales: Wholesale Food Processor (FFP)
- 🟡 Over \$15,000 in sales, only retail - Retail food Establishment (FFE)

More FAQs and prices are listed on the [MDARD website](#).¹

¹ Note - MDARD often refers to the “Limited Wholesale Food Processing License” as “FLP”, the “Wholesale Food Processor” as the “FFP”, and the retail license as “FFE”. There is no known logical reason for this confusing abbreviation, or the lack of listing the current license names on the application besides the government’s love of acronyms and their aversion to updating paperwork 😊



SMALL OPERATION EXEMPTION

Beekeepers with less than \$15,000 in honey sales are not required to process their honey in a licensed facility. Under the Michigan Food Law, processing facilities operated by the producer are exempt from licensure if gross sales are \$15,001 or less (Food Law Act 92 of 2000, 289.4105). You should still meet all of the requirements of the Michigan Food Law and are expected to follow safety guidelines. Just because you don't require a license does not mean that you can extract honey in unsanitary conditions! MDARD can still visit a non-licensed facility if they are following up on a complaint to make sure that the honey house follows the best food processing practices available.

PLAN REVIEW

MDARD does not just license the facility, they license the processing. This means that they will want to view and understand the process from start to finish. Before you apply for a license, you can submit plans for your facility and your processing plan (standard operating procedures, SOPs) to MDARD for a free review to make sure they meet the state and federal requirements. New establishments should contact the Michigan Department of Agriculture & Rural Development Lansing office at 800-292-3939 to speak with a plan review specialist. The plan review specialist can provide a [Plan Review Worksheet](#) and [Plan Review Application](#). Review the [plan submission instructions](#) and [manual](#).

Worksheets and more information can be found at the [MDARD plan review site](#). Questions about the plan review process should be emailed to MDA-Info@michigan.gov.

Michigan beekeepers worked with MDARD many years ago to develop an outline of what constitutes best practices for a honey house. **Those guidelines are available in Appendix 1 of this document.** If you follow these specific guidelines, you should also be in compliance with federal law.

STORING HONEY

Any food processing license will allow you to store food. If you store your honey at the location where it is processed, the storage of the honey will be covered by your processing license, if you have a retail establishment license (see section on selling honey below), you can store honey under that license. If you have over \$15,000 in sales and want to store honey in a location different from where it is processed, you will need to apply for a Food Warehouse License (abbreviated as FFW, naturally). MDARD does not have any information as to what is sufficient to



store honey, but a warehouse must be inspected by MDARD, so it cannot be a room in a home that is connected to the living quarters.

Examples that may work as warehouses include the following:

- A dedicated structure or shed.
- A locked room in a home with a separate entrance from the living quarters.
- An unused garage, as long as gas and oil are not stored there, and it is rodent/ pest proof.
- A box trailer outside, as long as it is not going to be mobile.

To know if your structure serve as a warehouse, contact your regional food inspector: Call MDARD, Food and Dairy Division (1-800-292-3939).

STEPS FOR LICENSING (PROCESSING OR WAREHOUSE)

1. [Fill out the MDARD New Food Establishment Checklist](#)
2. Develop your processing plan and submit it for a [plan review at MDARD](#).
3. Submit a new food establishment application
 - a. Online through the [Licensing Portal System](#)
 - b. Or printed and mailed
 - i. [Processing application](#)
 - ii. [Warehouse application](#)
4. An inspector will contact you when once your application is approved and will schedule an inspection.

WHAT TO EXPECT DURING AN INSPECTION

After you submit your application, you will be contacted by your regional inspector to set up a date for an inspection. For a processing license (Limited Wholesale Food Processor License (FLP) or Wholesale Food Processor (FFP)), they will want to inspect your honey house while you are actively extracting honey so they can see the entire process. Keep in mind that the inspectors are trained in evaluating food safety risk and not beekeeping. You may have to do a lot of education, as most inspectors have not visited many honey houses, and may know little about honey production. MDARD does not have a standard checklist or SOP, and there is no way to know ahead of time what



your inspector will be looking for or will consider best practices. Furthermore, different regional inspectors may make different decisions, have different ideas of what are best practices, and use their own personal judgement and experience. The best way that you can prepare for an inspection is to visit other licensed facilities and copy their plans as well as you can.

The inspector will look for the following good manufacturing practices:

- Hygienic practices and personnel (hand washing, clothing, glove use)
- Plant and grounds (facility construction and design)
- Sanitary operations (maintenance, safe chemicals, pest control)
 - Sanitizing equipment and surfaces
- Sanitary facilities and controls
 - Safe water, sewage, restrooms, handwashing facilities
- Equipment and utensils
- Process and controls
- Finished product and supply storage

Labeling honey

If you are selling your honey, you must have it appropriately labeled. The Food and Dairy Division of the Michigan Department of Agriculture and Rural Development is responsible for assuring that your honey is properly labeled. The [Michigan Food Law of 2000, PA 92 of 2000](#), as amended, and the [Title 21 of the Code of Federal Regulations \(21CFR\)](#) are the primary Michigan laws governing food labeling.

SUMMARY OF BASIC LABELING REQUIREMENTS

Labels for honey processed, produced, or sold in Michigan should follow the [Michigan Food Labeling Guide](#). In 2018, the FDA released the [Federal Food Labeling Guide for Proper Labeling of Honey and Honey Products](#). These guides will direct the specific wording of what should be on the label, as well as other criteria like font size and position on the label. A label must be on each unit that you are selling. However, in some cases, such as packaging small jars for wedding favors, you can label the box - no need to label each tiny, pretty jar.

Here is a basic summary of what is required on a honey label:

Contents

The term “Honey” (the product identity) must be on the principal display panel (the portion of the package most likely to be seen by the consumer at the time of purchase).

- The word honey should be generally parallel to the base of the package
- “Honey” must be prominent and of a type size reasonably related to the most prominent printed matter on the front panel (at least ½ the size of the largest print on the label).
- You do not have to declare the floral source of honey on the label. However, you may label the honey with the name of the plant or blossom if you or the honey producer has information to support the conclusion that the plant or blossom designated on the label is the chief floral source of the honey.
- Avoid using fanciful terms, or any description of your honey that could be confusing to the consumer.
- The form of the food must be listed if you are marketing it in several forms (e.g., chunk honey, comb honey, creamed honey, etc.). Liquid honey can just be labeled as “Honey”.



Name and address

MDARD must be able to reach you if there are any issues with the honey.

- Your name and address must be listed as a single unit (not separated by other information).
- The label must include an actual business address (not a P.O. box), city, state, and zip code. The [MI food labeling guide](#) indicates that the street address can be omitted if the person or business is listed in a current city or telephone directory. Google / internet searches should be sufficient if your business name and city are listed, as MDARD would be able to find you.
- If you sell honey from other beekeepers, you must qualify your role (e.g., “Distributed by_____”). The address on the label should be the address of the last person who repackaged the honey. For example, if you purchased a five-gallon bucket of honey, and bottled it, then your address should be on the label. On the other hand, if you purchased a five-gallon bucket from a beekeeper and turned around and re-sold the honey in the original five-gallon bucket, their information would remain on the final label. The last person to put the honey in a container should label it, because they are responsible.

Quantity declaration

- The quantity must be in the lower third of the principal display panel.
- The minimum font size of the quantity is determined by the size of your principal display panel. See the table in the [MDARD Food Labeling guide](#) for details.
- The net weight (weight of the honey only) must be listed in both metric and US customary system (both grams and oz/ lbs.).

Honey processing exemption label (<\$15,001 in sales)

If you did not process your honey in a licensed facility (allowed for beekeepers with <\$15,001 in sales), you must include the following statement on your label:

"Processed in a facility not inspected by the Michigan Department of Agriculture & Rural Development"

This statement must be in 11pt font (1/8” tall) in a color that provides a clear contrast to the background. It may be handwritten, as long as it is clearly legible, written with durable/permanent ink, and at least 1/8” tall.

For more information on the honey licensing exemption label, visit the [MDARD Cottage Foods Information page](#).

FEDERAL NUTRITION LABELING REQUIREMENTS

Nutrition labels

If you sell more than 100,000 units or if you make nutrition claims, you are required to have a nutrition label in accordance to the [FDA food labeling guide](#). If you are a small business, and you file for a [small business exemption](#), you do not have to have a nutrition label. This exemption [can be filled out online](#) and must be done annually. The FDA definition of a small business is one that meets the following two criteria: 1) sells less than 100,000 units in the US each year, and 2) has less than 100 full time (or equivalent) employees. You must have the nutrition label if you are making any nutritional or health claims, or have any other ingredients (oils, flavors, etc.). In cases where you add other ingredients, you cannot file for an exemption. If you have a nutritional label, you must follow [the most recent requirements](#) for these labels.

Added sugars (for producers that require a federal nutrition label)

Single ingredient products like honey are *not* required to declare the number of grams of added sugars in a serving of the product on the Nutrition Facts label, as they are exempt from the requirement under the [Agriculture Improvement Act of 2018](#) (Pub. L. 115-334, known as the “Farm Act”). Honey labels must still include the percent Daily Value for added sugars to ensure that consumers have information about how a serving of these products contributes to their total diet. Daily Values are the amounts in grams, milligrams, or micrograms recommended for certain nutrients, or recommended not to exceed for certain other nutrients for Americans 4 years of age and older. The FDA is stating its intent to exercise “enforcement discretion” by permitting the use of the “†” symbol immediately following the added sugars percent Daily Value declaration, which leads to a footnote inside the Nutrition Facts label explaining the amount of added sugars that one serving of the product contributes to the diet as well as the contribution of a serving of the product toward the percent Daily Value for added sugars. The symbol and footnote are not a requirement, but FDA encourages manufacturers to use them as a way to provide useful information to consumers. For more information, view the FDA information page on the [2019 Final Guidance for the industry](#).

- [FDA Guidance for Industry: Declaration of Added Sugars on Honey](#)
- [FDA Factsheet with sample labels](#)

Ingredient statement

Because honey is a single-ingredient food, you do not need to include an ingredient statement on the label.

TERMS SUCH AS 'RAW,' 'LOCAL,' 'NATURAL,' 'PURE,' AND 'UNFILTERED' ARE NOT REGULATED, AND DO NOT HAVE OFFICIAL DEFINITIONS. IT IS UP TO THE BEEKEEPER TO ENSURE THAT THEIR PRODUCT AND ITS HANDLING IS APPROPRIATE TO THE USE OF THESE TERMS. THE TERM 'ORGANIC,' ON THE OTHER HAND HAS A SPECIFIC MEANING, AND YOU MUST BE OFFICIALLY CERTIFIED TO USE THIS TERM. SEE THE ORGANIC CHAPTER LATER IN THIS DOCUMENT.

You do not have to have your label reviewed by the state before you sell your honey. However, MDARD can review your label to make sure that it is compliant. If you are interested in having MDARD review your label, follow the following instructions:

Submit all of the following:

- a. The label or a sketch of the label
- b. Specifications of the container's dimensions
- c. The quantitative formula (recipe if more than just honey)

To: Labeling specialist, Food and Dairy Division

Michigan Department of Agriculture & Rural Development

P.O. Box 30017, Lansing, MI 48909

Or call 1-800-292-3939

Example honey label from a licensed facility, with <100,000 units (no exemption statement or nutrition facts).



SELLING HONEY

Honey can be sold direct to customer, wholesale, or online. MDARD does not restrict honey sales as long as the product is properly labeled. This is true for producers who use a licensed facility, as well as beekeepers who are under the \$15,001 exemption for a producers' license. You do not need to have a food establishment license to sell retail honey from a licensed producer.



Photo by Andrew Potter

Michigan Food Law Act 92 of 2000. 289.4113 289.4105 Person, establishment, or organization exempt from licensure

(e) Retail outlets for the sale of prepackaged honey or maple syrup produced in this state if the outlet is operated by the producer and the processing facility is licensed under this act. Both retail outlets and processing facilities are exempt from licensure under this act for producers with gross sales of \$15,001.00 or less of honey or maple syrup. In such case, the honey and maple syrup shall have labeling substantially similar to that for cottage food products as described in section 4102(3).

(f) A temporary food establishment with no food preparation using only single-service articles and serving only non-potentially-hazardous food or beverage.

(g) A retail food establishment that does both of the following: (i) Only sells prepackaged, non-potentially-hazardous foods. (ii) Offers only an incidental amount of food, such as the sale of single-service packages.

Best practice note: While not required by law, if you are selling honey in any quantity, including selling to another beekeeper, you should record and label lot or batch information and save a sample from each lot. That way, if a problem is found at any time, it will be easy to test the source, and will minimize the amount of honey that will need to be disposed, if necessary.

HONEY WITH ADDED INGREDIENTS

The rules for processing, labeling, and selling pure honey are different from the rules for selling honey with *any* added flavors or ingredients. There are exemptions for honey that do not apply to that has anything added to it. Once you add any ingredient to honey, it falls under more strict processing requirements.

Processing honey with added ingredients

The \$15,000 licensing exemption explained earlier only applies to pure honey. However, other foods may be exempt from licensing if they fall under the Michigan Cottage Food Law ([PA 113 of 2010](#)). The cottage food law in Michigan allows individuals to make non-hazardous foods for sale in their home kitchen and sell them directly to customers. The cottage food law only applies to foods that are non-hazardous and for sales up to \$25,000. For sales over \$25,000, or for foods that may be hazardous or need temperature controls (refrigeration), the producer would require a food license.

Answers to frequently asked questions about the cottage food law can be found [at the MDARD website](#).

Labeling honey with added ingredients

Labelling requirements change if even one food or flavor is added to honey. If your label makes any direct or indirect representation of a primarily recognizable flavor it must be named in a way that describes that flavor, in accordance with 21 CFR 101.22(i). For example, if you add raspberry flavor to honey (yum!), and have a drawing of a raspberry, you should choose a name that describes the characterizing flavor like “Raspberry-flavored honey”.

If you add any products or flavors, you should also add a statement of ingredients (21 CFR 101.4) that includes the common or usual name of each ingredient. For our yummy raspberry honey, the ingredient statement would show “honey” and “natural flavor” in descending order of predominance by weight.



For more information on federal labeling requirements for honey with added ingredients, see the [FDA Document “Proper Labeling of Honey and Honey Products: Guidance for Industry](#) and the [FDA’s Food Labeling Guide](#).

If your product falls under the cottage food law exemption, you must include the following statement on your label in at least 11pt font (or handwritten 1/8” tall): "Made in a home kitchen that has not been inspected by the Michigan Department of Agriculture & Rural Development".

Selling honey with added ingredients

If you are selling honey with added ingredients under the cottage food law (<\$25,000), you can only sell directly to the customer (farmers markets, roadside stands, etc.) For more information see the [document Can I sell this? The Michigan Cottage Food Law](#) by MSU Extension. Sales of products above the \$25,000 Cottage Law limit would be determined by your food license (retail or wholesale).



Organic Honey

‘Organic’ is a regulated term; if you are not certified organic, you must not make any organic claim on your label or use the USDA organic seal anywhere on the package. If you use the term ‘Organic’ or the seal, and you are not certified as organic, you can be fined.



While there are no federally accepted organic honey guidelines, you can still become certified organic. An organic certifier can determine that your operation is organic by using the existing organic guidelines for livestock ([USDA organic regulations for the scope of livestock production](#) (sections 205.236 - 205.240)) and the [2010 Formal recommendations from the National Organic Standards Board for Apiculture](#). These recommendations include parameters specific to beekeeping, such as foraging areas, supplemental feed, and hive construction.

If you are interested in becoming a certified organic operation, you will have to be certified by an accredited certifying agent. The USDA [National Organic Program](#) (NOP) [outlines the certification process](#) and maintains [lists of USDA-Authorized Organic Certifying Agents](#). Technically, agents can also be found through the [NOP database of certified operations](#) by searching “honey” in the “Certified Products” field, though there are often no certified honey producers listed.

The reason that there are few to no organic honey producers in the United States is because the requirements regarding land use around the hives are unattainable in most areas. There are researchers currently evaluating the forage range, and hopefully changes will be proposed in the near future.

The [Michigan Organic Products Act \(Public Act 316 of 2000\)](#) establishes an organic registration requirement for organic producers, handlers, and certifying agents. It also prescribes fees associated with registration, development of a data system to track organic products produced by registered producers, development and implementation of organic production standards, and enforcement through investigation and sampling programs. This act does not specifically list honey, but anyone producing organic products, handling organic products, or certifying organic operations in Michigan needs to comply with Act 316 registration requirements.

[USDA Guide for Organic Livestock Producers](#)

[A Guide for Conventional Farmers Transitioning to Organic Certification](#)



Resources for beekeepers

MICHIGAN BEEKEEPERS ASSOCIATION (MBA)

The mission of the MBA is to promote honey bees to the general public, to help one another in maintaining healthy honey bees, and to encourage more research on honey bees. It is the umbrella organization for local clubs in Michigan, and it sends out an informative newsletter and hosts two annual conferences. [More information can be found on the MBA website.](#)

LOCAL BEEKEEPING CLUBS

Many areas have local beekeeping clubs that provide education, meeting space, resources, mentoring, etc. to area beekeepers. MBA maintains a [map of local clubs](#).

MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY EXTENSION

- [Michigan State University Beekeeping Resources](#)
- [Michigan State University pollinator-related news and events](#)
- MSU Extension Apiculture
 - Ana Heck, Apiculture Extension Educator, heckanar@msu.edu
 - Zachary Huang, Honey Bee Extension Specialist, bees@msu.edu
 - Meghan Milbrath, Honey Bee and Pollinator Extension, mpi@msu.edu
- [MSU Product Center](#)

Appendix I - Honey house regulations

Michigan Beekeepers and MDARD worked together to develop a set of best practices for a honey house, since a lot of the MDARD information is related to general food processing and does not contain information on honey processing. This should be used as a guide to set up your honey processing facility to meet food safety standards, but the final licensing is at MDARD food inspectors' discretion.

For more information on food establishment criteria, you can [watch the MDARD Video](#).

Processing facility. A honey house is any stationary or portable building, or any room or place within a building used for the purpose of extracting, processing and/or handling of honey. It must be constructed in a sanitary manner, suitable to the operation, well maintained, in good repair and vermin proof. During the processing of honey, this place is to be used only for operation or storage of equipment incidental to the activity. The grounds adjacent to this building should be free from all litter, waste, refuse or anything that may constitute an attractant, breeding place or harborage for rodents, insects, and other pests.

Floors. Floors of all rooms in which honey is handled must be of impervious and easily cleaned material and must be smooth, in good repair and kept clean. Floors that have a drain should drain into an approved sewage disposal system.

Walls and Ceilings. Walls and ceilings shall have washable surfaces, be clean, and kept in good repair.

Ventilated Openings. There shall be adequate ventilation and all ventilated openings shall be screened to exclude insects. It may be that honey bees enter the extracting facility, but efforts should be made to control entry and to eliminate bees once inside.

Lighting. Permanently fixed light source shall be sufficient to permit efficient operations. All lights over the processing area shall have protective shielding or be shatter resistant.

Water Supply. There shall be an adequate source of safe potable water under pressure in accordance with local sanitary codes. Water from a nonpublic source (private well) shall be tested at least once a year. Contact local health department about testing procedures and locations.

Approved septic systems - water disposal. MDARD does not approve septic systems but does require that the system be approved by the local health department. Beekeepers starting up a facility should contact their local health department for information on the approval process.

Toilets. Toilet facilities, including hand-washing basins, shall be conveniently available to honey house personnel.

Vector control. No chemicals or poisons shall be used to control insects or rodents while supers of honey are stored in the facility or extracting of honey is proceeding. Follow label instructions and use only approved pesticides.

Construction, care, use and repair of honey house, containers, and equipment. During operation, the honey house shall be used exclusively for extraction, processing, packing or other handling of honey and storage of equipment related to the activity of the honey house. Containers shall be free of internal rust and cleaned before use. Honey shall not be packed in containers which have previously contained pesticides, creosote, petroleum products, paint, toxic substances or anything that would react with honey. All equipment should be covered when not in use. Extracting equipment shall have hard surfaces that will not permit reaction of the acid in honey and should be lubricated only with food-grade grease.

Heating equipment. No boiler, oil stove or other heating equipment that gives off odor or dust may be used within the honey house, unless it is properly ventilated and complies with fire regulations.

Worker sanitation. Workers shall maintain a high degree of personal cleanliness and wear clean, washable outer garments.

Hand washing station. This area shall be conveniently located, easily accessible and supplied with tempered water, soap, single service disposable paper towels, or an effective sanitary drying device.

Ware wash sinks/cleaning and sanitizing. The Food Law of 2000 requires that all food-contact surfaces, including utensils and equipment, shall be cleaned as frequently as necessary to protect against contamination of food. The standard method of cleaning and sanitizing equipment and utensils is a three-compartment sink. In addition to the wash sinks, the facility needs to have at least one conveniently located hand washing sink. If using fresh hot water, sanitization equipment / utensil surface temperatures must reach at least 171°F (77°C).

Processing equipment. Processing equipment shall be constructed of durable, smooth and easily cleanable materials, well maintained and stored to avoid contamination.

Beehive equipment. Extracting supers shall be clean and free of contamination. Medication is to be applied only when required following label directions. Supers should be covered, transported in clean vehicles and stored in a clean/sanitary area prior to extracting.

Extracting honey. Uncapping should be done under sanitary conditions. Extracted honey should be covered if the process is not continuous. Each lot is processed separately, and a sample of each lot shall be retained with proper label identification.

Straining of honey shall be done with a clean mesh -cloth material or stainless-steel mesh. Reuse of cloth mesh is not advisable. If honey is filtered, the filters should be checked for damage to ensure they are clean and free from extraneous material.

Packaging honey (bottling) and labeling requirements. The processing of honey for bottling shall be done in a clean/sanitary devoted facility. Retail and wholesale honey containers should be labeled with product identity, ingredients if any are added, a production or lot code, name, address of manufacturer, packer or distributor, and net weight.

Cooperative honey houses (central kitchens). As a cooperative honey house, multiple processors can use the licensed facility. The processors that use the facility are not required to obtain a license. Accurate records of members using the facility will be kept. From time to time, MDARD will examine the production records to verify that honey found in commerce was actually produced at the cooperative.

Transport of supers. Vehicles used to transport supers after removal must be clean. Supers must be covered during transport to prevent environmental contamination. Storage of supers must occur in a clean and sanitary environment.



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