

Honey is a popular product for direct marketing as customers can experience local flavors and unique aromas before purchasing.

This fact sheet includes information on:

- Selling raw honey.
- Selling processed honey.
- Labeling honey.
- Grading honey.
- Registering hives.
- Additional Resources

All Washington honey must be free from contaminants, labeled and graded prior to sale, and all hives must be registered.

Selling Raw Honey

Washington beekeepers who extract their own honey can sell it raw to both end consumers and wholesale markets without a WSDA Food Processor's License as long as they follow the requirements laid out in Washington state law. To read the Revised Code of Washington about honey, Chapter 69.28 RCW, search for it by number on the Washington State Legislature website, app.leg.wa.gov/RCW.

Raw honey may be warmed to hive temperatures to ease handling during extraction from the comb and during screening to remove fines. Raw honey should not be filtered to remove pollen and smaller organic material.

Selling Processed Honey

If honey is processed, then a WSDA Food Processor License is needed in order to sell it to end consumers and all other markets. Honey is considered processed if it is cooked, pasteurized, blended, "spun" or "creamed", or has any added ingredients or flavors. For example, selling honey sticks that contain pasteurized, colored, or flavored honey would require a WSDA Food Processor License.

The WSDA Food Processor License requires a sanitary, inspected facility and documented steps on how producers process honey. For more information about this license, visit the WSDA Food Safety Program's information online by searching for "Food Processors" at agr.wa.gov or contact them at foodsafety@agr.wa.gov or 360-902-1876.

Labeling Honey

Washington State law requires that all honey be labeled with the following information:

- Identification of the product: "Honey."
- Name and address of the producer.
- The net weight.
- The grade of the honey.

Identifying the floral source on the label is not required. However, if floral source information is included on the label, it must include all floral sources. Identifying only one floral type on a label when in fact the product contains honey from a blend of different floral sources is not allowed.

Grading Honey

For retail sale, honey must be graded based on the USDA standards. Producers may grade their own honey following the grading guidelines published by the USDA Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS) which can be found at ams.usda.gov by searching for "U.S. Grades and Standards for Extracted Honey" and "U.S. Grades and Standards for Comb Honey."

Registering Hives

In Washington State, all hives must be registered with the WSDA Plant Protection Division before April 1 of each year. This registration requirement is for home hives and those used in commercial operations. The registration requirement applies to all of the following:

- A person owning one or more hives.
- Brokers renting hives.
- Apiarists that reside in other states who keep hives in Washington.

REGULATIONS FOR SPECIFIC PRODUCTS

Registering hives provides official documentation that can be useful in the event of colony loss through poisoning or natural disaster. Fees are used to fund apiary research, as determined by the Apiary Advisory Board. While currently inactive, the advisory board is directed by law to inform the WSDA Director of any funding and research needs that are important to the apiary industry.

For a Hive Registration form, go to the WSDA website and search for "Apiary Registration Form." Annual registration fees are based on a sliding scale, from \$5 for 1 to 5 colonies to \$300 for 1,001 colonies or more. Beekeepers with questions regarding registration of beehives, or that have interest in participating in advisory board activities, should contact the WSDA Plant Protection Division at pestprogram@agr.wa.gov or 360-902-2070, or visit the WSDA website and search for "Apiary."

Some municipalities and counties set limitations on the number and location of hives on a property. These regulations vary. Contact the city or county planning department to learn about specific local requirements.

Additional Resources

The Washington State Beekeepers Association, wasba.org, is a voluntary membership organization that serves professional and hobbyist beekeepers with listings of local associations and classes on hive registration and other beekeeping topics.



5. Licensing

23. WSDA Food Processor License and Facilities